Hafa Adai!
Happy New Year!
$1
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2024 PERSON OF THE YEAR

Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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CORRESPONDENT

Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan (D-MP), who is the first person to represent the people of the CNMI in the U.S. House of Representatives, has served 16 years after being reelected to office seven times. Among his achievements was securing much-needed federal resources for the Commonwealth in relief legislation after the 2016 and 2018 super typhoons Soudelor and Yutu, and in the multiple COVID-19 pandemic aid bills enacted in 2020, which prompted *Saipan Tribune* to choose him as 2024 Person of the Year.

See SABLAN on Page 5

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) is *Saipan Tribune*'s 2024 Person of the Year.

CNMI mourns passing of former US President Carter

By MARK RABAGO
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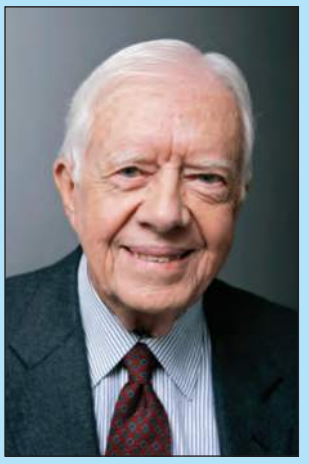
EDITOR

Jimmy Carter, the United States' 39th President, died at 100 years old yesterday and the CNMI is mourning his passing.

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and Gov. David M. Apatang said the CNMI joins the nation and the global community in mourning the passing of Carter—a leader whose legacy of compassion, vision, and dedication to the principles of democracy left an enduring mark in the CNMI.

See CARTER on Page 5



AP
Former President Jimmy Carter poses for a portrait during the Toronto International Film Festival, Sept. 10, 2007, in Toronto.

SHS' six-member team served over 6K animals in 2024

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
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CORRESPONDENT

Surpassing their already incredible 3,000 marker last year, and showing their true dedication to helping animals and pet owners in the CNMI, Saipan

See ANIMALS on Page 5

CHRYSTAL MARINO
The staff and volunteers at the Saipan Humane Society pose for a photo at the SHS clinic facility in Garapan.

***Saipan Tribune* donates to SHS and SCA. PAGE 8**
Chamber to host meet-and-greet with Lt. Gen. Lenderman. PAGE 8

INSIDE

TOP STORY FOR 2024
Notorious WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange found himself on Saipan back in June where, after over 10 years, he also found freedom following over five-years of incarceration in a case regarding dissemination of classified U.S. national defense information.
PAGE 2

SAIPAN TRIBUNE FAREWELL
For more than three decades, Saipan Tribune served as a beacon of local journalism in the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. On this pale December morning, as the printing press sputtered and fell silent, it marked the end of a newspaper that had faithfully chronicled the lives and events that shaped these Pacific islands.
PAGE 11

SAIPAN TRIBUNE FAREWELL
In the tapestry of local journalism, Saipan Tribune was never just another newspaper. It was a living, breathing chronicler of the Northern Marianas, woven together by the passion, dedication, and unwavering commitment of its remarkable team.
PAGE 20

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

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A Farewell to our Beloved Community
A SAIPAN TRIBUNE FAREWELL SUPPLEMENT

Local

1. Assange comes to town

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

Notorious WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange found himself on Saipan back in June where, after over 10 years, he also found freedom following over five years of incarceration in a case regarding dissemination of classified U.S. national defense information.

2024 TOP STORIES

Last June 26, a frenzy broke out on Saipan with media outlets from across the world flocking to the CNMI to witness the change of plea and sentencing of Assange, a journalist who was incarcerated for disseminating classified information regarding national defense.

Assange, who has served 62 months in jail at Belmarsh Prison in the United Kingdom as he fought extradition to the United States, was sentenced to time served following a change of plea and sentencing hearing before U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona.

AP

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, right, arrives, surrounded by the the media, at the United States courthouse where he is expected enter a plea deal, on Saipan, Mariana Islands on June 26 2024.

According to the judge, because the charge against Assange carries 41-51 months' imprisonment, Assange was

See ASSANGE on Page 4

2. King-Hinds assumes Sablan's role as NMI delegate

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

After over 16 years of service, Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) announced in January that he would not be seeking a ninth term as the CNMI's delegate in the U.S. House of Representatives

Sablan, the CNMI's first delegate in the U.S. House of Representatives (and only delegate to be renominated for eight consecutive terms), will give way for delegate-elect Kimberlyn King-Hinds following the November general elections.

King-Hinds, who has served the CNMI in numerous capacities including as chair of the Commonwealth Ports Authority, was one of five to vie for the U.S.-delegate seat last November.

Succeeding in the delegate race, King-Hinds will go down in CNMI history as the first woman, first Republican, and first Tinian native to represent the CNMI in U.S. Congress.

King-Hinds is set to officially be sworn in as delegate in Jan. 3 (Jan. 4, Chamorro Standard Time).

Meanwhile, Sablan has bid his farewell to the people of the CNMI through a town-hall back in November where he thanked his constituents for their trust over the years adding that he will continue to serve the CNMI in a different capacity.

3. Hyatt, Asiana, *Saipan Tribune* bid goodbye

By RACQUEL H. FLOYD
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CORRESPONDENT

After over 30 years, Asiana Airlines, one of the largest carriers servicing the CNMI, officially ended its operation last June 30, 2024.

The airline has been providing air travel to Saipan since May 1992 and has played a significant role in promoting tourism in the region.

The airline's departure may have broad economic implications, prompting efforts to secure additional flights from other carriers. The impact of increased operational costs and the upcoming merger with Korean Air appear to play significant roles in the decision. Stakeholders are seeking solutions to maintain travel capacity between Korea and the CNMI amidst these changes.

Hyatt Regency Saipan, in service since the 1970s, stopped its operation on June 30, 2024. The hotel has been in operation for 43 years.

The decision to permanently close Hyatt Regency Saipan is a significant loss, as it has been a mainstay in the region for decades. The closure affected employees and the community, highlighting concerns about job stability and the future of tourism on Saipan.

The interim name of Marianas as Beach Resort while waiting for the use of the Sheraton took over the operation of the hotel.

Today, the *Saipan Tribune* marked its final publication and operation. It was last Oct. 28 when the closure was announced.

The newspaper has served the island community and the Pacific region for over 30 years and has covered significant events, local impacts, athlete achievements, and community stories.

Management notes changes in media consumption due to technology advancements wherein internet access and mobile devices have increased demand for instant news. Many industries, including media, are reshaping business models to adapt.

The local economic challenges and recent calamities have impacted the operations and the decision to close was said to be difficult for management.

4. SMA, CPA feud escalates, new inter-island airline joins the scene

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

Star Marianas Air, Inc.'s battle with the Commonwealth Ports Authority regarding airport fees has come to a head with

See SMA on Page 3

2025
May the spirit of the New Year fill your heart with serenity and peace.
Wishing you a prosperous and joyous 2025!
From management and staff at McDonald's of Saipan
HOLIDAY HOURS
We will CLOSE Dec. 31st at 10pm and re-open
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Website: www.cnmiports.com

INVITATION FOR BID
PROJECT NO. CPA-IFB-002-25-(REPACKAGED)

SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 16, 2025 (2:00 P.M.)

"SUPPLY & DELIVERY OF 30 UNITS SELF-CONTAINED BREATHING APPARATUS"

THE PROPOSAL PACKAGE IS AVAILABLE FOR PICK UP AT THE COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY (CPA) ACCOUNTING OFFICE, 2ND FLOOR, DEPARTURE BUILDING, SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT BEGINNING DECEMBER 17, 2024. AN ADMINISTRATIVE FEE OF $100.00 SHALL BE PAID TO CPA BEFORE A BIDDER MAY OBTAIN THE BID PACKAGE. PAYMENTS SHALL BE IN CASH, CASHIER'S CHECK, OR CREDIT CARD.

PROPOSERS ARE TO SUBMIT ONE (1) ORIGINAL AND TWO (2) COPIES IN A SEALED ENVELOPE AND MARKED "SUPPLY & DELIVERY OF 30 UNITS SELF-CONTAINED BREATHING APPARATUS **(RFP-002-25)-(REPACKAGED)**" TO THE OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, 2ND FLOOR, ARRIVAL BUILDING, SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ON OR BEFORE 2:00 P.M., JANUARY 16, 2025. BIDDERS SHALL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATIONS ALL CHARGES ASSOCIATED WITH THIS PROCUREMENT BEFORE FINALIZING ITS BID PRICE.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CPA PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION §40-50-1020 AND 1025 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CPA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL BIDS OR PROPOSALS, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF CPA.

FREDERICK PANGELINAN
ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DATE: _____

5. Double murder in the New Year

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
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CORRESPONDENT

A Chinese couple, who were longtime Saipan residents, green card holders, and teachers at a local school, suffered from a brutal death and were found lying in their blood at their apartment on Tun Joaquin Doi Road in Fina Sisu on Jan. 4, 2024.

The Department of Public Safety released the identity of the victims as 57-year-old Wang Jindong and 52-year-old Liu Shuping. Both victims suffered blunt force trauma to the head, with Wang declared dead at the scene and Liu passing away later at the hospital.

According to DPS, they have identified several persons of interest and are examining all angles, including potential links to a prior break-in reported by the victims just two weeks before their deaths. No murder weapon or clear motive has been determined. Investigators are exploring whether the deaths were related to burglary, robbery, domestic violence, or another personal connection.

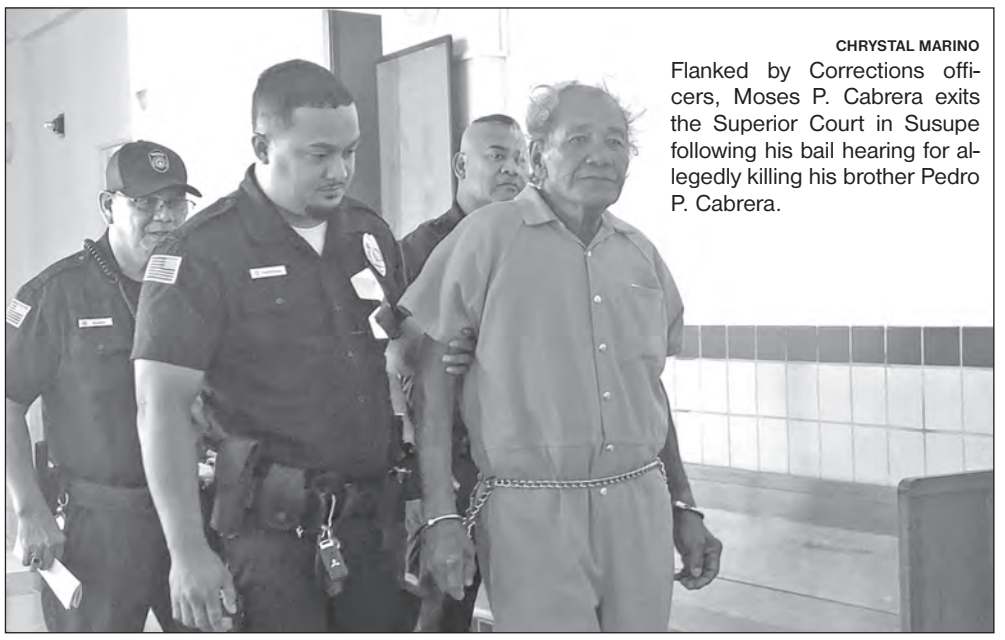
The bodies were discovered after a colleague of Liu's, concerned after she failed to show up for work, spotted blood through the window and alerted authorities.

When *Saipan Tribune* followed up on the case, police said they are still waiting on pending autopsy reports from the mainland. The information surrounding the deaths is still a mystery, as the case remains unsolved.

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

Wang Jindong, 57, and Liu Shuping, 52, were found brutally attacked last Jan. 4 in their residence in Finasisu.

6. Fatal fallout: Cabrera brothers' case



CHRYSTAL MARINO

Flanked by Corrections officers, Moses P. Cabrera exits the Superior Court in Susupe following his bail hearing for allegedly killing his brother Pedro P. Cabrera.

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
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CORRESPONDENT

The discovery of a decomposing body at the Garapan Fishing Base on Aug. 1, 2024 alerted police to a possible homicide as the male victim's face was grotesquely damaged due to inflicted severe head trauma.

Through tattoo markings on the body, the Department of Public Safety confirmed the identity of the deceased to be 71-year-old Pedro P. Cabrera, a former inmate at the Department of Corrections. According to files Pedro Cabrera was convicted of second-degree murder of a police officer in 1984. In 2000, during his parole, he faced charges of kidnapping, raping a minor, and assaulting someone with a dangerous weapon.

Investigation of the death led officers and detectives to the Cabrera home in Oleai where they found evidence linking Pedro's older brother, 78-year-old Moses, to the crime, including bloodstains, and a hammer (the alleged weapon) as well as splattered brain matter near his residence.

After his arrest, Moses allegedly confessed to the police that a heated argument over family land led to a physical altercation where Pedro threatened to stab him. Moses claimed he then struck Pedro with a hammer, later disposing his body at the fishing base.

Moses waived his preliminary hearing, but during his arraignment on Aug. 1, he pleaded "not guilty."

The second person of interest, Pedro and Moses' other brother Fritz, who allegedly was at the crime scene around the window of the crime, was also under DPS investigation for the death, and according to police has not been cleared, but no statement of arrest or detainment of the other Cabrera was made.

7. Text vs. testimony: Abraczinkas trial

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
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CORRESPONDENT

On account of rape allegations against him from his former co-worker at the NMI Superior Court last year, and after attempts to try and recuse all sitting NMI Superior Court judges from his case, later filing a motion to stay trial proceedings a former law clerk, William Abraczinkas inevitably stood on trial before a jury from Sept. 9 to 13, 2024.

Guam's Judge Elyze M. Iriarte presided over the five-day trial, where an eight membered jury reviewed defense and prosecution arguments, witnesses, including the alleged victim's, testimonies. The "he-said, she-said" case became a text versus testimony trial, where defense referred to text messages, and prosecution referred to witness and victim testimony.

The jury later found Abraczinkas guilty of sexual assault in the first degree, assault and battery, and disturbing the peace by a jury. He was ordered to turn himself in to the Department of Corrections. Abraczinkas has made attempts to seek acquittal, but a hearing for the motion is not yet known, so it is unsure whether the jury's verdict will remain or be overturned. Sentencing is expected around January 2025.

CHRYSTAL MARINO

William Abraczinkas walks with his defense attorney Katie Comstock to the court room of his jury trial in NMI Superior Court.

8. First round of 902 talks held in CNMI

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

The discussions between the CNMI and U.S. governments pursuant to Section 902 of the Covenant held in Saipan back in October was productive and is expected to be extended.

Last July, incumbent U.S. President Joseph Biden responded to the CNMI's request to initiate consultations between the governments of the CNMI and the United States pursuant to Section 902 of the Covenant to "establish the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in political union with the U.S."

As part of his response, Biden officially appointed assistant secretary of the Interior Carmen G. Cantor as his representative for the 902 consultations.

Last Oct. 24, CNMI government representatives met with Secretary Cantor and representatives of the federal government at the District Court for the NMI to initiate 902 talks.

Following two whole days of discussions, in a quick statement from Cantor, she said it was a pleasure and honor to engage in discussion with CNMI stakeholders.

In a statement from Palacios, he shared that discussions have been focused on urgent matters and the next round of talks will be held in Washington.

There is no word yet when the next round of talks will begin or if changes will be made given a new, incoming administration.

SMA

From page 2

SMA on the verge of getting evicted from its home-base hangar on Tinian. Meanwhile, a new airline has entered the inter-island air service scene—Micronesian Air Connection Services.

SMA and CPA have been hashing out their issues regarding airport usage fees for years. The feud has resulted in SMA nearly suspending its inter-island flights which would have proved detrimental for residents of Tinian and Rota who depend on these flights to get to Saipan for medical care and what not.

However, this year, the battle came to a head when SMA sought an extension on their hangar lease on Tinian.

Earlier this month, in response, CPA informed SMA that for failure to pay their balance of over $1 million, their request has been denied and they have 30 days to evacuate.

SMA has expressed that airport fees are unrelated to its lease (which they have being paying).

SMA has since sought the help of community leaders to reason with CPA on their decision.

Meanwhile, a new inter-island air service is underway for the CNMI which would encourage health competition with SMA, MACS.

MACS, operated by J&P Holdings, is currently awaiting an official qualifying certificate before finally launching its services.

The Commonwealth Economic Development Authority has recently approved to recommend J&P Holdings' application for a QC to Gov. Arnold I. Palacios in the form of a 100% tax abatement for a period of 22 years.

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios has expressed his support for incentivizing businesses like MACS, however he says he wants to thoroughly review CEDA's recommendation before acting.

SMA, for its part, has expressed its opposition to a qualifying certificate for MACS.

The CNMI currently awaits Palacios' decision on the matter.

9. Police dogs die, animal rights advocates raise concern

DPS

Department of Public Safety K-9 officer Boss.

DPS

Department of Public Safety K-9 officer Beni.

By RACQUEL H. FLOYD
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CORRESPONDENT

2024 TOP STORIES

Two of the Department of Public Safety K-9s passed away on Sept. 8 after the K-9 handlers that day had originally left the dogs in the car with the A/C on as they went to secure drug evidence at DPS headquarters.

The absence of media during the burial ceremony became controversial and speculation left some with incident cover up. Still, according to DPS, it had been requested by DPS Commissioner Anthony Macaranas to keep the ceremony private.

Saipan Humane Society founder and president Lauren Cabrera said the tragic deaths of K-9 officers Boss and Beni was a very unfortunate situation and that she sympathizes with their handlers.

Cabrera said the passing of Boss and Beni also showed that heat stroke is a serious concern in a tropical island like Saipan and that the islands' animal companions, especially dogs, are not immune to it.

"I feel very badly about the situation. It's a very unfortunate accident. Heat stroke is a very serious issue here and can happen very quickly. It's important to remember that dogs cannot sweat like people do to regulate their body temperature. They rely on panting, and this doesn't work effectively at extreme temperatures and the dogs can rapidly decline."

Meanwhile, Macaranas dispelled conspiracy theories that DPS whitewashed the probe following the death of K-9 officers Beni and Boss, saying it was "inherently tragic" and was like losing a family member for their handlers.

MARK RABAGO

The final resting place of Department of Public Safety K-9 officers Boss and Beni at DPS headquarters in Susupe.

ASSANGE

From page 2

able to leave the CNMI a free man culminating a 14-year battle with the U.S. Department of Justice.

In addition to being sentenced to time served, the indictment and charges against Assange filed in Virginia will be dismissed.

Court information against Assange states that Assange—who is not a United States citizen and does not possess U.S. security clearance or authorization to possess or control documents, writings, or notes relating to the national defense of the United States—conspired with Chelsea Manning, a United States Army intelligence analyst who held top secret U.S. security clearance and was deployed to forward Operating Base Hammer in Iraq, from at least 2009 and continuing through at least 2011 to disseminate classified information relating to the national defense of the United States.

Specifically, the duo allegedly received documents, writings, and notes connected to U.S. national defense.

The co-conspirators are accused of willfully communicating documents relating to the national defense to persons not entitled to receive them in furtherance of the conspiracy.

10. Rise in misdemeanor, theft, teen, and drug-related crime

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
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CORRESPONDENT

In 2024, the Department of Public Safety garnered in dozens of cases relating to thefts around the island, with community members reporting someone had burglarized their house or business establishments, siphoned gas from their car in the early hours of the morning, or that their car's tires had been stolen, one even reported a food thief.

The past year, DPS has quickly released the information regarding these crimes, in an effort to work together with community members and media partners to locate these thieves. Although some thieves have yet to be found and arrested, there have been several that have been caught and rewarded with the infamous silver bracelets and jail time.

Among the most successful DPS arrests this year were the "coin thieves," who were the suspects involved in a Aug. 28, 2024 coin machine theft occurred at Fresh Laundry in San Vicente. Surveillance footage revealed two masked individuals using a red sedan to steal the machine, which held an estimated $1,500 to $2,000. Police identified the suspects as George Grover, 33, and Dino Mettao, 32. The coin machine was disposed of by Carl Camacho, who confessed and implicated Grover and Mettao. The machine was later recovered at Susupe Beach Park on Aug. 29, 2024, with key components missing. On Sept. 19, 2024, during a search at Grover's residence, officers found stolen items from the coin machine and an E-bike linked to another theft case. Grover admitted to the crime, confirming Mettao's involvement. The suspects were arrested on Sept. 20, 2024, and charged with theft and burglary, with bail set at $10,000 each. Their court appearances included a preliminary hearing on Oct. 2, 2024, and arraignment on Oct. 7, 2024.

DPS

This surveillance video footage shows the coin thief enter Fresh Laundry in San Vicente and exit with the establishment's coin machine.

Dino Mettao also happened to be involved in another heist, where he and group of eight men who were arrested as well, were charged for their involvement in the theft of Coral Ocean Resort's golf carts. DPS arrested the seven individuals connected to the Sept. 10, 2024, theft of golf carts and machinery from Coral Ocean Resort in Agingan. The stolen items included several golf carts, two portable welding machines, and an angle grinder.

On Sept. 17, 2024 one of the stolen golf carts was recovered, leading investigators to the San Antonio residence of Anthony and Andrew Duenas, where more stolen parts were seized. On Sept. 24, 2024 warrants were issued by Associate Judge Teresa Kim-Tenorio, which led to the arrests of Aaron Cabrera and Cain Stanley Songao Fitial, charged with theft and conspiracy, with bail at $20,000 each. Anthony Duenas, charged with conspiracy and receiving stolen property, with a bail $15,000. Andrew Duenas, Brian Rios, Dino Mettao, and Terrance Cabrera, charged with receiving stolen property also at $15,000 each. A couple of days later, the eighth link in the group, Skyler Benavente, was also arrested. Benavente, Fitial and Mettao had also been linked to other cases of theft.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Jay Billy, second from the left, and JR Tipingeni, also known as Awatan, are escorted to their bail hearing at the NMI Superior Court in Susupe.

Most disturbingly, there were several scares involving minors. With several lockdowns happening at the Francisco M. Sablan Middle School, due to threats, to a young boy bringing an air gun to Hopwood Middle School and allegedly pointing it at a fellow student causing three learning places to lockdown. But probably the most widely spread and community enraged cases involved the group of young men who filmed themselves robbing and beating up a Chinese taxi driver.

On Dec. 10 at around 8:35pm, DPS officers were alerted of a robbery incident at the beachside near the Coral Ocean Resort in Agingan. The suspects were identified and arrested that Saturday, Dec. 14, soon after one of the juveniles posted a video of the incident on social media which went viral. The assault video, filmed by one of the minors, showed the suspects choking and beating the victim with the taxi's seatbelt. The victim, an Asian man, pleaded for his life and mentioned his family, to which the suspects responded mockingly and continued their threats. The adult suspects that were arrested are Jay Billy, 20, and JR Tipingeni, 19, and the three juveniles involved are 15 years old. All suspects face charges of kidnapping, aggravated assault and battery, robbery, and disturbing the peace, with bail set at $50,000 each. The adult suspects are now in custody at the Department of Corrections. Information about the juveniles is being withheld due to their age.

SABLAN

From page 1

Normally, *Saipan Tribune* doesn't name politicians as Persons of the Year, but Sablan, who is turning 70 on Jan. 19, will retire in politics after 2024.

Sablan will end his successive eight terms in U.S. Congress on Jan. 3, 2025. Citing that the time has come to pass the delegate's responsibility to a new one, he did not seek a ninth term in the November 2024 election. Kimberlyn King-Hinds is his successor. For 30 years, beginning in 1978, citizens of the CNMI elected a resident representative, commonly known as Washington representative, representing CNMI in the U.S. capital.

In 2008, the Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008, known as federalization law, replaced the position of resident representative with a nonvoting delegate to the House.

Sablan became the first beneficiary of the federalization law that also granted the CNMI its first elected representative to the U.S. Congress.

The election of the first delegate was held on Nov. 4, 2008, during which he ran as an independent as the Democrats then had nominated another candidate. Sablan, however, caucuses with the Democrats. He was then reelected several times and ran unopposed in 2016, 2020, and 2022 elections.

He ran as an independent in all of his reelection campaigns between 2010 and 2020. He ran as a Democrat for the first time in 2022.

As the CNMI's delegate for 16 years, Sablan considers bringing a lot of federal money to the Commonwealth as his biggest achievement.

With Sablan's efforts, money for Medicaid, rose from $8 million a year to $65 million a year now. And every year, the funding would increase.

"I think, like any politician, bringing money to our district, is always very important," said the delegate in a recent interview with the media.

Sablan recently had to see a doctor at the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. but he got lost in the hospital "because there's been so much good improvement."

He noted that CHCC now has a cardiologist, an oncologist, and three psychiatrists. Sablan said he does not know of any jurisdiction in the U.S. mainland of this small (CNMI) "would have that kind of thing."

Sablan said there's many things that he would have liked to accomplish during his terms, and one of those is to see the passage of his legislation, H.R. 560. He believes that it's only right to pass H.R. 560, which grants Marianas-only permanent residence to certain long-term foreign workers and investors who are already lawfully present in the islands.

The delegate said the beneficiaries of that legislation, are people that will have no political impact on an election because they're not going to be citizens.

"But we need to learn as a community, as a people, as Chamorros and families. We need to learn to appreciate more the contributions of everyone who lived here and made contributions to the community," he said. Sablan said passing H.R. 560 is not only because it's the right thing to do, but it will also benefit the Marianas.

Sablan has taken an active hand in easing the transition from local to federal management of immigration in the NMI through assistance to individuals, working closely with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Labor on implementing policy and enacting into law extensions of a number of transitional policies.

Sablan is closing his doors on running for office again. He, however, wants to get involved by volunteering to help the community.

He mentioned plans to volunteer in the next school year with an umbrella group of the Parent-Teacher-Student Association.

Sablan underscored the need for the parents to get involved in the students and their children's schools. The delegate said the schools in the CNMI are getting better, but far from being good. "But these schools are still able to develop and nurture and educate really smart kids. I've seen so many jewels come to my office and visit or meet them somewhere," he said.

Sablan is now doing a lot of walking exercise on the island. He would start walking at 4am from the Kanoa Resort area up to the house of the late Joe Lifoifoi in Lower Navy Hill.

He is also doing some reading a lot of books now and loves to check the Saturday Market. Sablan said he has no plan to write a book or an autobiography.

"I don't think it will sell," he said.

Before deciding to first run as delegate, Sablan served as Commonwealth Election Commission executive director for 10 years.

Sablan said as CEC executive director, he did everything he could to make sure he was fair and the elections were free.

Before joining the CEC, he served two terms in the CNMI House of Representatives, then selected to be a special assistant in Washington, D.C. to U.S. Senator Daniel K. Inouye of Hawaii.

Sablan said he grew up with people who were four, five, 10 years older than him. Sablan is confident that his successor, King- Hinds, will do well during her first term. He said King-Hinds is coming into the House that's modernized, in which tools are readily available, whether it's for legislation and communication.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

ANIMALS

From page 1

Humane Society shared that they were thrilled to have helped over 6,000 furry friends during 2024.

In 2024, SHS hosted three major spay and neuter events, and throughout the year brought several professional veterinarians on island for wellness checks. Seeking to combat overpopulation and health issues among CNMI's furry residents, they with many local agencies as well as local partners in animal adoption and rescue like the Boonie Babies, the Boonie Flight Project, and the Office of the Mayor's Dog Control, reviving the trap and neuter program, as well as treat many sick animals or perform needed surgery on emergency cases.

As a current leader in the CNMI's animal care efforts, the opening of their clinic this year had been a milestone for the team at Saipan Humane Society. But the opening of a clinic had not been the initial goal at the beginning. It had been born of necessity. SHS founder and president Lauren Cabrera had started the non-profit with a main goal to help the animal over-population in the CNMI. She and current director of clinical services, Ruby Ma, had founded SHS specifically for spay and neuter services. Together they sought to bring professional vets to help spay and neuter pets on island. "In the beginning, our primary goal is, like, to host as many spay and neuter clinics as we can and also do all the outreach about, like, access to care, animal cruelty or spay and neuter. But after Saipan Cares closed, we kind of, like, switched our, like, goal and mission to the wellness part." Ma said.

"That was never the goal. But it was very clearly the need of the community," said Cabrera, "Once Saipan Cares closed, we had already done one spay and neuter clinic at the Saipan Mayor's Office dog control shelter. And one day we're there and people kept coming in and in asking for help with their pets, preventive meds, vaccines, so when Saipan Cares closed, we're like, what is happening? Are they reopening or is there really, like, a void now? We thought spay and neuter was the greatest need…and it is a huge need. But the reality is that there's a lot of people who really love their pets…So pet care that's a huge need as well."

Cabrera said that since they opened their doors, they've seen an immense increase. "It really took off. From one month seeing 292 pets to the next seeing 670. It's insane. Wow. Last year, we did 319 surgeries, so we doubled, more than doubled."

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

CARTER

From page 1

"President Carter played a pivotal role in the historic establishment of the CNMI as a Commonwealth in political union with the United States. On October 24, 1977, he signed the proclamation affirming the full force and effect of the Northern Mariana Islands Constitution, a landmark moment in our history. The presidential proclamation helped to mark the dawn of a new chapter of partnership and progress, solidifying the shared values of freedom, self-governance, and mutual respect between the Northern Mariana Islands and the United States."

Palacios and Apatang said as the world reflects on his remarkable life, the CNMI honors Carter not only for his role in shaping the political landscape of the CNMI, but also for his unwavering dedication to humanity, peace, and service.

"His efforts in advocating for human rights, combating global health challenges, and championing the values of equality and compassion remain an inspiration to us all. The people of the Northern Mariana Islands extend their deepest condolences to the Carter family. May his legacy continue to inspire generations to come, and may we honor his memory by striving to uphold the principles of justice, unity, and progress that he so dearly cherished."

CNMI Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) also paid tribute to Carter in a statement from the outgoing congresman.

"Appreciating his long life and service, Andrea and I mourn the passing of President Jimmy Carter. Guided by his faith, President Carter lived an exemplary life worthy of imitation," he said.

It's a sentiment shared by Sablan's would-be successor, delegate-elect Kimberlyn King-Kinds.

"It is with profound sadness that we the rest of the world mourn the passing of President Jimmy Carter, a true servant leader whose life exemplified humility, compassion, and unwavering dedication to the betterment of humanity. From his leadership in the White House to his tireless efforts with Habitat for Humanity and global peace initiatives, President Carter's legacy of service will forever inspire us. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Carter family and all who were touched by his remarkable life. May he rest in eternal peace," she said.

Delegate Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen (R-A. Samoa) also shared her heartfelt tribute to Carter.

"I have fond memories of the entire Carter family from the time President Jimmy Carter sent his son Jeff and daughter-in-law Annette to Pago Pago. The President designated them as his personal representatives to the first inaugural of an elected Governor of American Samoa, Uifa'atali Peter T. Coleman. My dad had me show them around part of that time, as did others, and in turn, they invited my husband Fred and me for private dinner in the White House family quarters. This was a particularly generous act on their part to allow us in the areas that few people get to see, including guiding us through the map room, the famous Lincoln bedroom, Queen's bedroom and third floor. While we were there, President Carter and First Lady Rosalynn Carter arrived and very kindly greeted us."

She said that personal kindness is forever part of President Carter's lasting legacy.

"He spent his decades of influence as a former president helping people especially through Habitat for Humanity. As President, his most famous foreign policy achievement is perhaps brokering the sustained peace between Israel and Egypt, signed in 1979 following the Camp David Accords in 1978. This achievement has served the world well for many years, and all supporters of Israel's right to exist can celebrate it. I know millions of people are thinking of the Carter family, praying for them, and remembering the historic life and personal Christian faith of President Jimmy Carter."

Carter, the peanut farmer who won the presidency in the wake of the Watergate scandal and Vietnam War, endured humbling defeat after one tumultuous term and then redefined life after the White House as a global humanitarian, has died. He was 100 years old.

The longest-lived American president died on Sunday, roughly 22 months after entering hospice care, at his home in the small town of Plains, Georgia, where he and his wife, Rosalynn, who died at 96 in November 2023, spent most of their lives, The Carter Center said.

"Our founder, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, passed away this afternoon in Plains, Georgia," the center said on the social media platform X. It added in a statement that he died peacefully, surrounded by his family.

As reaction poured in from around the world, President Joe Biden mourned Carter's death, saying the world lost an "extraordinary leader, statesman and humanitarian" and he lost a dear friend. Biden cited Carter's work to eradicate disease, forge peace, advance civil and human rights, promote free and fair elections and house the homeless as an example for others.

"To all of the young people in this nation and for anyone in search of what it means to live a life of purpose and meaning—the good life—study Jimmy Carter, a man of principle, faith, and humility," Biden said in a statement.

Biden spoke later Sunday evening about Carter, calling it a "sad day" but one that "brings back an incredible amount of good memories."

"I've been hanging out with Jimmy Carter for over 50 years," Biden said in his remarks.

He recalled the former president being a comfort to him and his wife Jill when their son Beau died in 2015 of cancer. The president remarked how cancer was a common bond between their families, with Carter himself having cancer later in his life.

"Jimmy knew the ravages of the disease too well," said Biden, who scheduled a state funeral in Washington, D.C., for Carter on Jan. 9.

Biden also declared Jan. 9 as a National Day of Mourning across the nation and ordered U.S. flags to fly at half-staff for 30 days from Sunday.

Businessman, Navy officer, evangelist, politician, negotiator, author, woodworker, citizen of the world — Carter forged a path that still challenges political assumptions and stands out among the 45 men who reached the nation's highest office. The 39th president leveraged his ambition with a keen intellect, deep religious faith and prodigious work ethic, conducting diplomatic missions into his 80s and building houses for the poor well into his 90s.

"My faith demands—this is not optional—my faith demands that I do whatever I can, wherever I am, whenever I can, for as long as I can, with whatever I have to try to make a difference," Carter once said. ***(With Associated Press)***

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
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EDITORIAL

Immigration is good for America—Newcomers are the clear answer to population collapse

Immigration is essential to America's health, otherwise we would be losing population and heading to a downward economic spiral. According to Census Bureau figures published Thursday, international migration accounted for about 84% of the country's roughly 3.3-million-person increase between 2023 and 2024; without it, the U.S. population would be without a shadow of a doubt stagnating.

In fact, newcomers pushed our populace growth to nearly 1%, its fastest rate in 23 years, proving that political calls by Donald Trump and others to close our borders are dumb as well as wrong.

Incoming First Pal Elon Musk has long been preoccupied with birthrates in the highly developed nations, adopting the line that these countries are headed to a sort of extinction. Just Saturday, he was back on the topic, using his social media megaphone to warn that "Japan and many other countries face population collapse."

There are a number of public policy interventions that could conceivably help the crisis as Musk envisions it. There could be big increases in housing for would-be families who can barely keep their heads above water in small or shared houses and apartments. There could be safety net fiscal policies like an expanded child income tax credit and child care subsidies to make the decision to have children seem financially feasible in the long run.

Yet, the No. 1 policy solution to a declining working-age population and its strains on the economy and the social safety system is the one answer that Trump and Musk won't embrace: immigration.

There is no substitute; no one has found an alternative, anywhere. Japan is on the brink of population disaster because they've tried every solution except a broader loosening of immigration laws.

Only recently, in the face of an ever-worsening crisis, have the Japanese lurched towards the obvious, too late to head off some of the painful effects of a warped population pyramid: too few young workers to support too many retired seniors. And the problem keeps getting worse as birth rates decline.

Europe is on the same path of declining populations, stubbornly refusing to accept that the much-maligned waves of recent immigration have been a lifeline. The anti-immigrant rhetoric has been so acute that an anti-immigration far-right extremist in Germany—ironically himself an immigrant—just attacked a holiday market, killing at least five and injuring hundreds.

The United States' global primacy, the very idea of American exceptionalism itself, rests entirely on a base of mass immigration that has fueled our growth with newcomers from around the world. The immigrants and their descendants then become Americans. This is not and has never been a matter of opinion; opponents will claim that this idea is "woke" or globalist or any number of other loose ideological terms because they cannot refute it on the merits.

There is no American Century, no dollar as reserve currency, no unmatched military, no soft power, no cultural dominance, no scientific preeminence, no industrial might without the absorption of talent and labor from everywhere else. We can only hope this most fundamental of American ideals survives the second Trump era, before irreversible damage is done.

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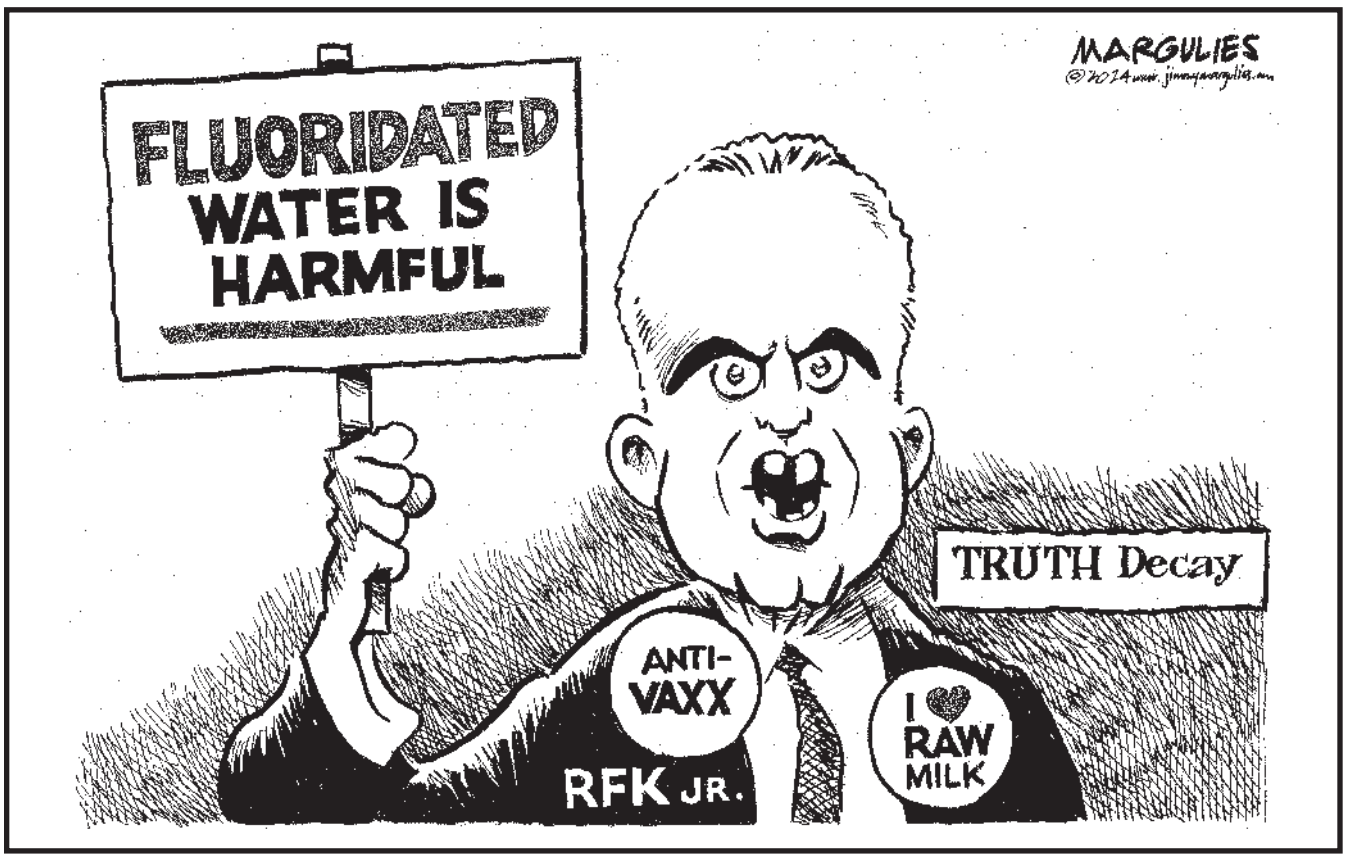

Making Tourism Our Business: Thank you, Si Yu'us Ma'ase, Ghilisou

By CHRISTOPHER A. CONCEPCION
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Christopher A. Concepcion is the managing director of the Marianas Visitors Authority.

As 2024 comes to a close and 2025 begins, it's an opportune time to thank the many partners—government, business, non-profit, and individuals—who have chosen to make tourism their business in this past year.

Looking to the year ahead, we are both optimistic and realistic about the state of tourism. Airlines remain one of our top most important partners—alongside travel agencies and tour operators—and with the support of the Commonwealth Ports Authority and other related local and federal agencies, we are projecting the following air service: from Seoul-Incheon, twice daily service by Jeju Air and daily service by T'way; from Busan, twice weekly service through Feb. 25, 2025; from Hong Kong, twice weekly service by Hong Kong Airlines; from Tokyo-Narita, three times weekly service by United Airlines; and daily service from Guam by United. There are positive indications of additional airlift from Japan in 2025, and the MVA is also engaging with a full-service carrier from Korea for potential service.

Based on this airlift, arrivals are anticipated to increase to at least 252,000 this fiscal year, to include a full recovery of Korea arrivals and 60% recovery of total arrivals compared to pre-pandemic levels. However, we all know the tourism industry is volatile and sways easily based on local, national, and international factors. Sunday's crash in Muan, Korea by a major Korean carrier was a tragedy, and our thoughts and prayers go out to the victims and their families. The MVA has personally reached out to the carrier offering our support at this difficult time. We are cautious about and closely monitoring the effects of this on the travelling public. Meanwhile, the development of a strong 3rd source market remains a priority of the MVA and is critical to restoring a healthy, vibrant economy.

The MVA's marketing efforts—coupled with the development and growth of annual signature events such as the Rota Sweet Potato Festival this year—must also be accompanied by CNMI-wide destination improvements, including addressing blighted buildings, airport improvements, public restrooms, stray dogs, litter, and other issues. It's impossible to name every office, but there is indeed a lot to be grateful for, thanks to the many contributions made in 2024.

Thank you to the governor and Legislature for giving the MVA a budget funded by hotel occupancy tax collections— $6 million. It's certainly not as much as our competitors are funded, some with five times or more than our annual budget, but it is an amount that we agree to work with and that is allowing us to continue to make incremental increases in visitor arrivals, organize and expand the MVA's annual signature events, enhance select tourist sites, and more.

Our police officers have a challenging job. We thank the Department of Public Safety for reopening the *koban* in the heart of Garapan and for the work they do day in and day out in our villages to help protect our visitors and our community.

From the airlines that commit to fly to The Marianas, to our travel agency partners, hotels that offer special rates and other incentives to attract visitors, and more, we thank our private sector partners for both their collaborations with the MVA and their own extensive investments in marketing the destination and elevating the visitor experience here.

Non-profits have also been instrumental, like PDM Promoters that help us organize December's Christmas in The Marianas. Marianas Tourism Education Council remains our steadfast partner in educating students about the industry, how it helps them, and what they can do even at a young age to support tourism efforts. 500 Sails for working to provide opportunities for visitors to experience the unique traditional maritime sailing traditions of the indigenous people of The Marianas. The Saipan Rotary Club, Rotaract, Lions Club, church groups and other community organizations for their island-wide cleanups.

Our individual community members. One of the most common comments heard from visitors is how beautiful our islands are and how friendly the people are. That starts with individuals taking pride in their island home and keeping it clean, especially after a barbecue at the beach. It continues with a warm smile and greeting or a helping hand extended to a visitor. Even stopping at a random crosswalk to allow pedestrians to cross the street gets the attention of tourists, many of whom have commented that this is the first place they've seen such friendly automobile drivers. Saipan, Tinian, Rota, and the Northern Islands are second to none when it comes to hospitality.

And last but certainly not least, our visitors. All 230,000+ of them who made The Marianas their destination of choice this year. Our visitors are the lifeblood of our economy, and we hope each of them who came in 2024 returned home with fond memories of our beautiful islands, our friendly people, and the experiences they had during their time with us. Thanks for choosing to spend your time with us and for telling others about the incredible place we call home.

Tourism is Everybody's Business...thanks for continuing to make it yours in 2025!

A sad adios—thanks *Tribune* and JP!

By AMBROSE M. BENNETT
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Ambrose M. Bennett is an economist who minored in sociology, political scientist, a retired teacher, and former CNMI Board of Education member, a James Madison Fellow (U.S. constitutional scholar), a Fulbright-Hays and lifetime humanities scholar who resides in Kagman III in the CNMI.

It is truly sad to see the *Saipan Tribune* leave us, as the newspaper has played a vital role in carrying the "plus" (news, opinions and ideas) for the people of the CNMI. There is nothing can replace a newspaper that reaches out and touches our society on a daily basis bringing us the good, the bad, the old and new with the professionalism of the editor, reporters, and staff. All of you and your work at the Tribune will surely be missed in the mornings.

I also want to say a personal thanks to the *Tribune* for publishing my op-eds over the years, as I'm sure you wouldn't have continued publishing by work if there was no merit and I truly appreciate the support. To the editors, JV and Mark, you guys are awesome for taking the time to go through my op-eds and putting them in a normal format for your readers as I understand the preference because there are people who don't like my writing style with caps. But I never could have done it without you and a *dunkalu* thanks for all you have done in publishing my op-eds.

On a final note, I must thank my late friend John Pangilinan (JP), former editor and owner of the building that houses the Tribune. I met JP in Guam as his competitor but over time we became very good friends, as I worked with his staff to get another business up-and-running in Guam. We became so close that when we moved to Saipan and started building our home JP gave us a beautiful circular staircase for free, as a gift for our home. JP was also a straight shooter, as he would often tell me "Ambrose you have a very sharp tongue" and I have to tone it down before I publish it, which I understood, as I know the truth can hurt and when I put an edge on the truth it really hurts. But JP was a person we call in my culture as being real people as there is no better quality other than being a devout follower of God's teachings.

God bless the *Saipan Tribune* and all the people who made it happen and I will check you on the rebound as we say in my culture.

A Pacific charter for the Pacific century

By UIFA'ATALI AMATA RADEWAGEN
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen is the delegate of American Samoa to U.S. Congress.

Talofa,

It's good to be with you! Thank you for all that Heritage Foundation does in research, analysis, and bringing together ideas to strengthen the country and promote peace and freedom.

This is a gathering of friends to Pacific Island peoples, and, with a new administration and Congress coming into office next month, I appreciate the chance to share some thoughts about current events in the Pacific and where the U.S. might chart its course in the years ahead.

I have been working on my remarks since I was invited to make them some weeks ago, but I scrapped my approach in light of recent events in South America, where Peru hosted this year's APEC summit. So instead of presenting an update on our regional agenda and commenting extensively on Andrew Harding's excellent paper.

I want to start with talking about the perceptions and realities created by news coverage of President Biden's audience with the People's Republic of China President Xi Jinping in Lima, Peru and coverage of the President's time there in general. Our House Select Committee on China refers to PRC as Chinese Communist party or CCP rather than CPP because we have no quarrel with the people, just the Communist Party that rules them.

So I employ the select committee's terminology in speaking of the CCP.

It was disconcerting. The worldwide headlines gave a sense of CCP domination of the 2024 APEC proceeding, against a backdrop of the Pacific coast of the South American continent. And it didn't help that President Biden was treated as second fiddle and the media made it appear that he spent a lot of time wandering around aimlessly. He may be leaving office soon, but he is our president and the leader of the most powerful country on earth, and I don't like the treatment he received from other leaders and by the press.

In Lima, President Xi took center stage before the world, in recognition that the CCP has replaced the U.S. as a continent's largest trading partner. But even that story of the CCP's trade boom was eclipsed by Xi's unveiling of his new $3.5 billion mega-port at Chancay, Peru.

This creates the prospect of establishing—effectively—a new "bridge across the Pacific," moving a great volume of exports and imports between China and South America. The Chancay port has the potential to host CCP naval and military forward positioning, spreading influence into the Americas. While CCP was expanding into South America, the U.S. has wisely prioritized first and second island chain counter-positioning. That included our build up at Guam and Palau, as well as Space Force downlinks, and Army missile programs at Kwajalein, enabled under the 2024 COFA renewal treaties.

The Heritage Foundation's "Pacific Pivot" report confirms that America and our friends in the Pacific have focused bilateral and multilateral priorities on the historically Micronesian and Melanesian nations further to the west and north of the PIF region. That focus evokes in Washington the metaphor of a "bridge across the Pacific" from the American west coast to Hawaii. This American bridge to the Pacific was extended to Guam and CNMI north of the equator, then the Freely Associates States, the Pacific Islands Forum or PIF region, and beyond to Asia.

Meanwhile, from my perspective in American Samoa, the only U.S. homeland jurisdiction in the South Pacific, the new "bridge across the Pacific" between PRC and Peru changes, for better or worse, the potential for expanded PRC presence and influence in the South Pacific. American Samoa is located at the center of the huge Polynesian Triangle that lies to the east and south of the Melanesian and Micronesian subregions of the Pacific, which understandably have been the focus of more U.S. counter-positioning.

Island leaders in the South Pacific now face a new metaphor—and new realities—of a bridge from PRC running through our islands, waters, and airspace, across the Pacific island-chain homelands of our peoples to South America. The shipping lanes from the China mainland to all the major ports must pass through the Polynesian triangle at the center of which is the smaller triangle of the Tongan and Samoan Islands and eastern Fiji, all of which share common cultural values and family ties.

In the aftermath of the 2024 APEC meeting, it is clear the islands I represent in Congress, along with our more southerly and westerly U.S.-aligned PIF partner nations, find ourselves in the pathway, perhaps at the crossroads, of the PRC route through the South Pacific with obvious flyover and stopover possibilities on their new super-highway to South America.

It also is a reality that CCP state enterprises can have a subversive comparative advantage in competition with democracies, in terms of CCP unlawful political and economic warfare, which we know they exercise as if that is their rightful prerogative.

Thus, the Americas are the western hemisphere from a historically Euro-centric perspective, which culminated in the events during the 20th Century that made it also the Century of the Atlantic. Politicians and diplomats long have talked of the 19th century being the century of the Mediterranean, the 20th century being the century of the Atlantic, and the 21st century being the century of the Pacific. The Americas served as the western front for two European wars in the 20st century and now current events truly have made the Americas the eastern front for whatever challenges that lie ahead in the 21st Century the century, finally making this the Century of the Pacific with our islands situated right in the middle.

In that context, my message is that America, its allies and partners throughout the Blue Continent, and the larger Indo-Pacific, need to decide if we have the will to remain free and democratic. Can we harness the energies and capabilities of our peoples to face and overcome threats to international peace and security? Which of our friends around the world will stand with us to restore rule of law and liberty that is being eroded?

The 2022 Pacific Islands Summit Declaration was worthwhile but limited as a regional agenda. Can we do more than its call to "leverage partnerships" and "enhancing relationships?"

The crucial multilateralism of the India-Australia-Japan-U.S. Quad, and the AustraliaFrance-New Zealand-U.S. Quadrilateral Defense Coordinating Group, is imperative. But the hope for success of these security partnerships encourages us to more bold thinking about the lessons of history.

As we aspire to a "Pacific Pivot" that is more than a slogan, we recall that the Century of the Atlantic also was defined by what was then an Atlantic pivot, choreographed by leaders of the great Atlantic powers.

I refer, of course, to the Atlantic Charter, signed aboard the USS *Augusta* in Placentia Bay, Newfoundland in August 1941. It was a declaration against territorial aggrandizement through illegal aggression, and committed the allies to self-determination for all peoples, based on the American idea of government by consent of the governed.

The Atlantic Charter defined freedom under law for the nations of the world. Just in time, because four months later the great battle of the Atlantic Century spread to the Pacific and erupted in America's backyard at Pearl Harbor.

That was the first day in more than a thousand days of war for the U.S., ending in a great victory that was never guaranteed, an epic struggle to liberate our islands in which the U.S. became a true Pacific power. Fighting in two oceans, on Asian as well as European fronts, America's defense of freedom around the world to preserve freedom at home became an American creed. Joined by resistance fighters from our island peoples, Americans from distant farms of the mid-west and crowded inner-cities of the east became island warriors of the Pacific.

The self-determination principles of the 1941 Atlantic Charter became the founding principles of the United Nations Charter in 1945. That included the trusteeship provisions under which the U.S. administered the islands now known as the Republic of Palau, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia. In 1984, messages to Congress by President Reagan and his administration asked for ratification of the Compact of Free Association or COFA as an unprecedented instrument of U.S. foreign relations, and referred to the self-determination principles of the Atlantic Charter and Trusteeship Agreement, which are still part of the three COFA agreements.

Harkening back to that noble past now beckons us to a different, hopefully peaceful, but equally determined and noble endeavor, to secure a future of freedom under law. Instead of a Pacific pivot affirming the post-WWII values that prevailed in the last Cold War, are the U.S. and its Pacific partners equal to the CCP challenge in the second quarter of the 21st century? Some call it a new Cold War, with a notable exception being U.S. trade volume with China. Can a united Indo-Pacific community composed of freedom-loving peoples in free enterprise nations, with democratic models of self-government, now summon the resolve equal to the competitive challenge we face from CCP? I speak of moral, legal, political, strategic and economic resolve.

To do so, we must overcome the unlawful, weaponized political warfare that the CCP utilizes, which prevents it from joining the ranks of the mainstream nations seeking comity and reciprocity in the international commons.

To facilitate consideration of such a new era, I am calling for a Pacific Charter for Indo-Pacific freedom, to emulate the Atlantic Charter of 83 years ago and have provided a conceptual draft that I encourage the Heritage Foundation to consider as it further develops its proposals for the U.S. in the Pacific. I also am leaving with you additional proposals I will be working on in the House in the next Congress that outline related initiatives on Pacific islands regional health care, Marshall island nuclear test claims, U.S. fisheries policy in Pacific, and real political status democratization options for U.S. unincorporated island territories. I look forward to comments and suggestions from Heritage Foundation and other organizations involved with the Pacific and with leadership of our Indo-Pacific community of nations to advance a new multilateral agenda.

What I want to leave you with today is an image to consider. It is a vision of President Trump together with heads of government from Pacific Island nations and our IndoPacific friends and allies aboard a U.S. vessel in Pago Pago harbor in the center of the Blue Continent, emulating the 1941 signing of the Atlantic Charter, the declaration of a new Pacific Charter for this Pacific Century and beyond. Not only is Pago Pago Harbor at the center of the Blue Continent, it is also considered by many to be the finest harbor in the Pacific, which is why the U.S. negotiated with our chiefs almost 125 years ago to have exclusive access to the islands of which it is a part. We will be celebrating the special anniversary of our association with the U.S. next Aprli. My dear friend Fiame Mata'afa, the Prime Minister of neighboring independent Samoa, with which we share the Samoan Islands, recently successfully hosted the 2024 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, over which King Charles III presided. We were a little bit jealous of her hosting the King but, nevertheless, I would enthusiastically welcome her to come over to Pago Pago to join President Trump and other heads of government in signing our proposed Pacific Charter. I would love nothing better than to do so at the time of our 125th anniversary of being American as well as Samoan but I know time is too short to reach agreement but we should start now so we have an agreed upon document before President Trump leaves office I will close by telling those of you who do not know that the name of my island home means "a place of heavenly peace." Samoans will explain to you that we believe the Samoan Islands are the Garden of Eden for the Polynesian people and that God put us there, which explains why we are the only Polynesian island group that has no folklore about canoes bringing their first inhabitants from somewhere else. And, of course, the Pacific Ocean means peaceful ocean.

So, with a Pacific Charter, I hope it will bring us the peace that we pray for the IndoPacific and all the world. Thank you. *Soifua ma ia manuia.*

Saipan Tribune donates to SHS and SCA

By RACQUEL H. FLOYD
raxfloyd@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

Saipan Tribune donated a total of $1,000 cash and dog food to the Saipan Humane Society and Saipan Cares for Animals from the 20% proceeds of its farewell supplement advertisements. Each received $250 cash and $250 worth of dog food.

SHS executive director Guadalupe Attao expressed her gratitude to *Saipan Tribune* during the donation turnover of donations last Friday afternoon at the Saipan Humane Society office in Garapan.

"Thank you so much for bringing so much support to Saipan Humane Society, our team is very grateful for all the work that you guys covered for us and just take of us for this year. We are thankful for all these donations," said Attao.

Attao provided an update on the number of animals currently in their care, including those in permanent clinic, and those preparing for transport.

"Right now, we do have our permanent clinic dog as Grandma, and we do have a few dogs, the three others that we took from the shelter that are planning to fly out in the state's side," added Attao.

Attao encourages the community to continue spreading awareness of their organization's mission and activities.

"We love people to spread the word about who we are, what we are, what we do... it takes a village to support the animals on the island. For donations, they can reach out to us directly or they can visit our website."

Meanwhile, SCA board secretary Miho Evangelista said that the donations they received will be used to support foster programs, providing care for animals lacking shelter or boarding.

"So, sometimes we share with the foster, we don't have shelters and boarding services because there is no space available. We just share with the foster that we always to take care of the dogs and cats who will reach someone in the rescue... We are doing Saipan and Tinian," said Evangelista.

Evangelista manages two clinics, one on Tinian and another on Saipan, and the communication with clients, according to her, is primarily through messaging due to occasional duties.

She then expressed gratitude for *Saipan Tribune*'s community support and that the donation was unexpected and highlighted the group's dedication to animal welfare.

RACQUEL FLOYD

Saipan Humane Society director Guadalupe Attao, sixth from left, poses for a photo with *Saipan Tribune* staff last Friday afternoon after receiving the donations.

RACQUEL FLOYD

Saipan Cares for Animals board secretary Miho Evangelista, second from left, poses with the *Saipan Tribune* staff last Saturday.

Chamber to host meet-and-greet with Lt. Gen. Lenderman

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce will hold an upcoming meet-and-greet for Pacific Air Forces deputy commander Lt. Gen. Laura Lenderman scheduled for Jan. 10, 2025, from 11am to 1pm at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan's Azucena Room.

During this meet-and-greet, the business community will have the chance to engage in a direct dialogue with Lenderman on current issues and challenges facing the CNMI.

PACAF is responsible for Air Force activities spread over half the globe and supports 46,000 airmen serving in Japan, Korea, Hawaii, Alaska, and Guam. Lenderman was commissioned through the ROTC program at Duke University and earned an electrical engineering degree.

The discussion will focus on how PACAF can support efforts to address these challenges and contribute to the islands' development. PACAF will also share information pertaining to both the business and general community, enhancing understanding and awareness of PACAF's role and operations within the CNMI. Members and future members will have the chance to meet the deputy commander in person, facilitating clear, direct communication through the appropriate channels. This interaction ensures that feedback, concerns, and inquiries are addressed efficiently and effectively.

Registration includes valuable networking opportunities and the chance to participate in insightful discussions on key developments in the community. To register, RSVP by visiting: https://tinyurl.com/PACAFMeetandGreet, or contact our office at (670) 234-7150 or via email at contactus@saipanchamber.org for registration assistance. Please note that Chamber members are prioritized for RSVP of this event and future members will be placed on a waiting list to which Chamber staff will reach out to confirm attendance of waiting list participants on a first registered, first served basis five days prior to the event.

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce is a non-profit organization with approximately 125 members dedicated to promoting the economic growth and development of the CNMI. The Chamber serves as the collective voice of the business community, advocating for their interests, fostering collaboration, and driving initiatives that support the local economy. ***(PR)***

Azarvand Tax Law to present updates for businesses, self-employed individuals

With Trump's recent election as president, the Azarvand Tax Law anticipates significant changes to tax policies and labor regulations that could directly affect CNMI businesses. To support local business owners in understanding and adapting to these updates, they are hosting a workshop designed to benefit Saipan Chamber of Commerce members.

The workshop will cover key topics essential for CNMI business owners, including the potential impacts of Trump's proposed tax code on local businesses, CW-1 FICA obligations for employers, and updates on the Corporate Transparency Act (CTA) and Employee Retention Credit (ERC). Attendees will also learn strategies to avoid misclassification issues with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and the IRS, ensuring compliance and minimizing risks.

Workshop details:

- Date: Jan. 7 and 11, 2025
- Time: 5:30pm-7:30pm
- Venue: Last Shot Bar, Susupe, Saipan
- Cost: Free for current and former Azarvand Tax Law clients and subscribers and $25 for all other attendees (includes dinner + choice of two alcoholic beverages or three non-alcoholic beverages).
- Registration required: Click here to register or email tina@azarvandtaxlaw.com.

This workshop provides actionable insights and practical guidance to help businesses stay compliant and avoid penalties. The Chamber encourages all members to take advantage of these opportunities. Should you have any questions, feel free to reach out to the Chamber office. ***(PR)***

Judiciary to hold 11th Biennial Law and the Freshman Legislator Seminar

The Judiciary has scheduled "The Law and the Freshman Legislator Seminar" on Thursday, Jan. 9, 2025. At the seminar, the judges of the NMI Judiciary and U.S. District Court will give several presentations to the newly-elected members of the Commonwealth Legislature. Current and newly-elected members of the municipal councils have also been invited to participate for the first time.

All four newly elected legislators—one senator and three representatives—have registered to attend the program at Guma' Hustisia. Those legislators are:

- Senator-elect Ronnie M. Calvo (Rota)
- Representative-elect Raymond U. Palacios (Saipan)
- Representative-elect Daniel I. Aquino Jr. (Saipan)
- Representative-elect Elias M. Rangamar (Saipan)

Carmen C. Pangelinan is the sole councilmember who has registered to attend the seminar.

The seminar includes a lecture on the Covenant and the CNMI and U.S. Constitutions, an overview of the judicial process, a discussion on the common law, a presentation on legal research methods, and a roundtable discussion between the newly-elected officials and the judges and justices.

"This seminar continues to be an invaluable opportunity to foster relationships between the Judiciary and newly-elected officials while deepening their understanding of the vital role of the judicial branch in our government," said Chief Justice Alexandro C. Castro.

Since beginning in 2004, the seminar has hosted 89 legislators and has earned widespread praise for its informative and collaborative approach. Its lasting success has made it a staple among the Judiciary's outreach programs.

For further information, contact the Supreme Court at Supreme.Court@NMIJudiciary.gov. ***(PR)***

THANK YOU & Farewell

For thirty-four years, the press had sang,
Stories of life in every printing.
The hum of machines, the ink-stained hands,
A voice that traveled across the Marianas.

Through breaking news and heartfelt tales,
Through soaring dreams and stormy gales.
But now the time has come to part,
To close the pages, yet keep the heart.

Though the presses stop, the words remain,
In every reader, through joy and gain.
A legacy written in ink and cheers—
The soul of this paper will live on for years.

— Nhorleen Bitco Lilles

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

FOREVER AT THE SERVICE OF THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTHERN MARIANAS

DECEMBER 31, 2024

A FAREWELL TO OUR BELOVED COMMUNITY

To our dearest advertisers, readers, followers, friends, family, and the CNMI community,

With hearts full of gratitude and a touch of sadness, we bid farewell to you all as the Saipan Tribune closes the final chapter of its more than 30-year journey. For over three decades, we have been more than a newspaper—we have been your voice, your storyteller, and your partner in building a stronger, more informed, and united Northern Mariana Islands.

Together, we have navigated the highs and lows of our community's story. From moments of celebration that brought us joy to times of hardship when we found strength in unity, the Saipan Tribune has stood with you, reflecting the resilience and spirit of our islands.

From the first issue to the last, you have been our purpose and inspiration. To our loyal advertisers, thank you for trusting us to bring your businesses and messages to life. Your partnership empowered us to stay the course and continue our mission. To our readers and followers, you have been the heartbeat of this publication. Your engagement, loyalty, and encouragement gave us the strength to navigate the ever-changing tides of the media world.

To the entire CNMI community, thank you for welcoming us into your homes, businesses, and hearts. We have celebrated your triumphs, stood with you through challenges, and shared stories that reflect the vibrant tapestry of our islands.

As we close this chapter, we reflect on the relationships we've built and the legacy we leave behind. The Saipan Tribune may cease publication, but the spirit of community and commitment to truth that it stood for will live on in the memories we've shared.

Though this is goodbye, our gratitude is boundless. Thank you for more than three decades of love, loyalty, and support. We will carry the echoes of your kindness, faith, and trust with us always. Un dangkulu na Si Yu'us Ma'åse.

SAIPAN TRIBUNE:

End of an era for the voice of the Marianas

By TERI M. FLORES
Correspondent

For more than three decades, *Saipan Tribune* served as a beacon of local journalism in the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. On this pale December morning, as the printing press sputtered and fell silent, it marked the end of a newspaper that had faithfully chronicled the lives and events that shaped these Pacific islands.

What began in 1992 as a bold venture in local journalism, the *Tribune*, as it is also known to its readers, will cease publication this Dec. 31, 2024. While it carefully carved its way into the region's media landscape, the publication ends its journey with a whisper, leaving behind a legacy that stretched far beyond mere newsprint and ink.

Humble beginnings

The story of the *Saipan Tribune* began in 1990, when businessmen Mark Pangelinan and Larry Hillbloom founded a modest black-and-white newspaper published twice a week on Tuesdays and Fridays.

During its formative years, the newspaper was distributed gratuitously, later transitioning to a modest 50-cent pricing model that marked its evolution from a community service to a sustainable media venture.

Far more than just being a newspaper, the *Tribune* was a living and breathing archive of the Northern Marianas' most transformative years. The publication emerged during a period of significant economic and social transition for the Commonwealth, capturing the nuanced story of a community navigating complex political, economic, and cultural landscapes.

A pivotal moment came in 1993 when Pacific Publication & Printing Inc., an affiliate of Tan Holdings Corp., acquired the publication. This acquisition transformed *Tribune* and in 2002, it became the first newspaper in the Northern Mariana Islands to publish seven days a week.

A commitment to quality journalism

At the time it changed ownership, the mandate was clear—*Saipan Tribune* will be the most widely read and distributed newspaper both locally and, in the region, by providing objective, accurate and balanced news and information.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The author Teri Flores and Orleyne Tabucanon with *Saipan Tribune*'s editorial team circa 2004. From left standing, Jayvee Vallejera, Tabucanon, Mark Rabago, Flores, and John Ravelo. Kneeling and sitting from left, Edith Alejandro, Marianne Maraya, and Liberty Dones.

To make this happen, several publishers took turns in overseeing the newspaper. The *Tribune* developed a formidable team of professional reporters and correspondents, talented graphic artists, sales and advertising pros, and skilled press men, all of whom contributed to the newspaper's success.

Lynn Knight, one of the newspaper's former publishers and vice president, said her vision was clear—improve journalism, reduce bias, and elevate the paper's overall quality. "While every media company is owned by someone, good journalism strives to be unbiased," Knight explains, highlighting a fundamental principle that guided the *Tribune*'s editorial philosophy.

A collaborative newsroom

Like many regional publications, the *Tribune* grappled with the persistent challenge of operating with a lean editorial team, where staff must wear multiple hats and balance numerous responsibilities.

"Challenging barely scratches the surface," said Jayvee Vallejera, an 18-year veteran editor of the *Tribune*. "As a small newsroom, we only have the editor and associate editor. This was very demanding for two people. To paraphrase Vizzini in The Princess Bride, that would have been inconceivable!"

Compared to newsrooms in national newspapers, the *Tribune* only had Vallejera and his long-time associatre editor Mark Rabago manning the

See END on Page 12

Thank you, Saipan Tribune for 34 years of service.

Saipan Tribune

Si Yu'us ma'asi' yan ghilisow

On behalf of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, team, and membership, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Saipan Tribune for its unwavering commitment to keeping our community informed and connected since 1990. Thank you for covering the Chamber and its initiatives and activities, but more importantly, for your 22 years of valued membership with the Saipan Chamber of Commerce.

Wishing the Saipan Tribune team all the best!
Sincerely,

SAIPAN CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE

The Marianas
| Saipan | Tinian | Rota |

In its three decades of service, Saipan Tribune has made a lasting and positive impact on our Marianas community and beyond as a reputable source of local, regional, and international news.

Professional journalism is a hallmark of a strong democracy, and a strong democracy is one of the pillars of a strong economy. The Marianas Visitors Authority extends our sincere appreciation to the Tribune for partnering with us through the years in helping to keep the community informed of industry news affecting them and our tourism economy. Furthermore, the worldwide reach of the Tribune has been a valuable tool in educating a global audience about our destination and promoting our islands. All this, founded on a commitment to fair and accurate news reporting.

Thank You

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for your service, and thank you for making tourism your business.

FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, MANAGEMENT & STAFF

MARIANAS VISITORS AUTHORITY

END

From page 11

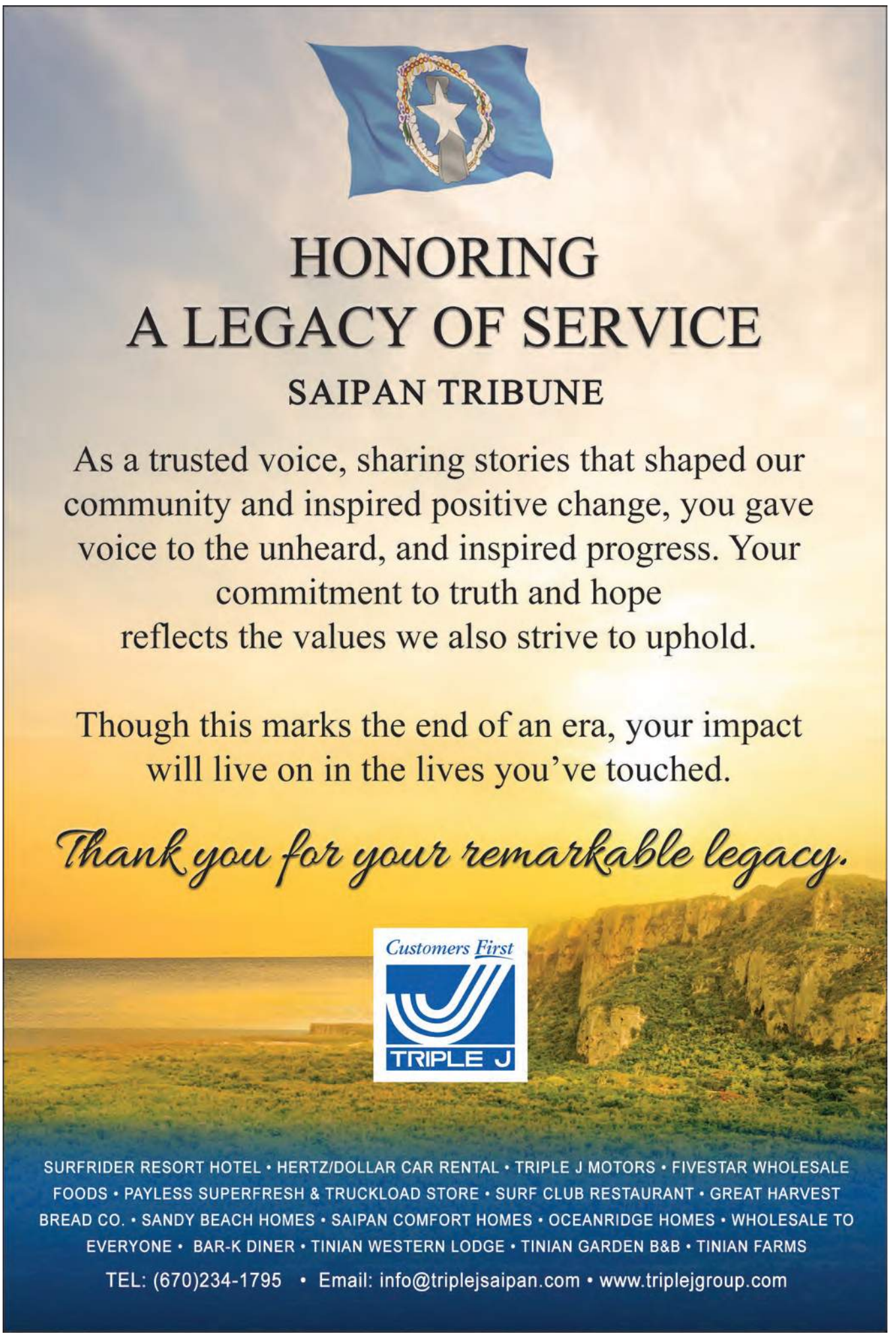
news desk. Aside from their main tasks, both editors also take on the additional job of proofreading and fact checking. Rabago, for instance, also wrote sports and business stories on top of his editing duties.

During critical events like elections, Vallejera and Rabago temporarily set aside their management roles and dive directly into reporting to ensure comprehensive and nuanced coverage.

To maintain efficiency within the constraints of limited resources, the two editors continually adapted by developing new skills that allowed them to meet the dynamic and evolving demands of the modern newsroom.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Saipan Tribune team in this undated photo.


HONORING
A LEGACY OF SERVICE
SAIPAN TRIBUNE
As a trusted voice, sharing stories that shaped our community and inspired positive change, you gave voice to the unheard, and inspired progress. Your commitment to truth and hope reflects the values we also strive to uphold.
Though this marks the end of an era, your impact will live on in the lives you've touched.
Thank you for your remarkable legacy.
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"A large part of what we did was take advantage of new technologies and mastering how to use them. We memorized keyboard shortcuts, so they become muscle memory. We taught ourselves how to use OCR which converts scanned pages into text for editing; or getting online help for creating infographics and other visual aids," explained Vallejera.

Tribune editors work doubly hard to get the paper to print. "We were always sprinting toward our deadlines. We called it creating daily miracles," shares Vallejera.

The biggest challenge the *Tribune* faced daily was to adequately cover the community's diverse news landscape.

In larger newspapers, one reporter is given one assignment or "beat." At the *Tribune* however, the editors worked with at most, five full-time reporters, each of whom were assigned to eight "beats." Vallejera said each reporter had to take on additional beats as their number went down. One reporter was solely assigned to write about sports. "We were essentially a skeleton crew."

To consistently meet their daily news quota, the *Tribune*'s editorial team leveraged two strategic advantages—the interconnected nature of Saipan's close-knit community and the robust professional networks cultivated by each reporter.

Vallejera explains that networking and institutional knowledge played a large role in how the reporters got their information. "Experienced reporters didn't physically go to each beat. Most of the time, they just call their news sources to get a feel of each of their assigned beats. This helps them focus their efforts on those stories that would interest more readers and gain more readership."

Under Vallejera's tenure, the *Tribune* developed its own comprehensive stylebook that standardized editorial practices and elevated the professional quality of its journalistic writing.

Knight recalls the transformation in the newspaper's direction when, after 2001, a strategic management approach and reimagined business plan was put in place. Initially met with skepticism, the new direction proved transformative, significantly reducing staff turnover and revitalizing the publication's core operations.

Knight credits the outstanding leadership of both Vallejera and Rabago whose unwavering commitment and professional excellence sustained the paper's evolution over more than two decades. "The change in editorial policy and performance was made possible with the hard work of Jayvee and Mark. The fact that these highly professional editors stayed there more than 20 years says a lot."

The astuteness and tireless efforts of the *Tribune*'s editorial team did not come unnoticed. Throughout the years, the *Tribune* received awards and special recognition beginning in 1996 with a special recognition in support of the arts from the 12th Annual CNMI Governor's Arts Awards.

In 2002, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-Region IX awarded the publication for its reporting on environmental issues in the Marianas. In 2003, the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force awarded the *Saipan Tribune* for raising awareness about environmental issues.

Through persistent efforts to maintain journalistic integrity and the desire to get out of its original mold as a corporate mouthpiece, the *Saipan Tribune* was able to establish itself as a trusted source of fair and accurate reporting.

In fact, a 2022 Northern Marianas Humanities Council survey of 500 residents found that 72% considered the *Saipan Tribune* the most trustworthy news source in the Northern Marianas. 66% of those surveyed also named the newspaper as its source of local news and information.

"I believe what made the Tribune a credible news source and a reliable partner of international media outlets is in large part due to the original team of well-respected journalists with extensive background in print media. They saw to it that their work consistently adhered to the basic tenets of journalism," said Vallejera.

In addition, the *Tribune* also gained a reputation for being a source of original content and in-depth stories. Vallejera remembers the time when the *Tribune* did a story that was inspired by a government press release.

"In 2009, our editorial staff did the 'Sunshine Project' to test the responsiveness of CNMI government agencies to the Open Government Act. Nearly half failed to respond according to the timelines set by the OGA. That project received a lot of praise, most notably from the venerable gadfly of CNMI journalism, the late Ruth Tighe!" said Vallejera.

Through its commitment to balanced and credible reporting, the newspaper gradually emerged as a critical commu-

See END on Page 14

Making headlines and history

Thank you to the Saipan Tribune for delivering stories that informed, inspired, and brought our community closer for over 30 years.

Your dedication toward championing the Northern Marianas and our region will always be celebrated and remembered.

Though the presses may stop, your legacy will live on– because great stories never truly end.

Biba Saipan Tribune!

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On behalf of the Saipan Mayor's Office and the entire community,
We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the

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THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

for its unwavering commitment to media coverage over the past 30 years. Your contributions have significantly shaped public discourse and enriched our society, making you an invaluable asset to our community. For three decades, the Saipan Tribune has not only reported news but has also invested in our community by shining a light on important issues, celebrating our local culture, and providing a platform for diverse voices. Your comprehensive coverage, even off-island, has kept our community informed and connected, demonstrating a dedication that goes beyond mere journalism. While it is difficult to see such an integral institution go, your legacy of journalism will be remembered by all of us. Thank you for your unwavering service, and I wish everyone at the Saipan Tribune all the best in their future endeavors.

RAMON "RB" JOSE BLAS CAMACHO
MAYOR OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF SAIPAN

END

From page 12

nication hub for international media outlets. The *Tribune* also partnered with the *Pacific Daily News* by providing the Guam-based publication with syndication services of CNMI related stories. It also became an exclusive partner of Crimestoppers CNMI.

Navigating community challenges

The newspaper adopted genuine journalistic standards, even in the face of community pressures and intense competition. Simultaneous to providing comprehensive financial backing and strategic oversight at the executive level, Tan Holdings maintained editorial independence by instructing managers of affiliated companies to refrain from interfering with the *Tribune*'s news coverage, shared Knight.

The *Tribune*'s commitment to journalistic integrity was particularly remarkable in a small community where reporting can be challenging. Knight recalls a specific instance that exemplified the newspaper's principled approach. "When a young investigative reporter wanted to aggressively pursue a story about local families involved in an ongoing legal process, the management intervened with sensitivity. We prioritized community respect over sensationalism."

Catherine Perry, owner of Integrity Communications, a public relations firm, emphasized the newspaper's commitment to journalistic integrity and balanced reporting. "It takes a strong person to be in editorial, especially in a small community. Despite the potential for misunderstanding, *Tribune*'s reporters have shown remarkable courage and objectivity. In my experience working with them, they have consistently prioritized factual accuracy over personal bias."

Operational innovations

Former operations manager Puy Macario said that simultaneous to the reinforcement of its journalistic standards, the newspaper also executed innovative strategies that were designed to expand its readership and product portfolio."

Despite already printing 2,500 to 3,000 copies, Macario said management sought to reach more island residents by distributing free copies to remote villages on the island.

In 2002, the *Saipan Tribune* underwent a significant visual and editorial transformation, introducing full-color cover pages and expanding its content with the addition of the Travelogue travel section;

See END on Page 17

Western Union
Money Transfer

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As the Saipan Tribune closes its chapter after 30 years, Western Union is proud to sponsor this special tribute edition. For decades, the Tribune has kept our community informed and united, and we are grateful for its lasting impact.

A portion of the proceeds from this edition will benefit local non-profits. Thank you, Saipan Tribune, for being a trusted voice for our community.

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SAIPAN			
Insurance & Business Management Corporation	HDH Building, Garapan	1-670-234-7888	8:00AM - 6:00PM (M-F) 8:00AM - 4:00PM (S)
ASKS Fashion & Salon	Garapan	1-670-233-2643	9:00AM - 3:30PM (M-S)
E-Center Remittance	Middle Road, Gualo Rai	1-670-233-5252	8:30AM - 2:00PM (M-S)
Island Best Choice	Marianas Business Plaza, Susupe	1-670-235-2883	8:00AM - 6:00PM (M-F) 7:00AM - 2:00PM (S)
Armatech Remittance	Susupe	1-670-234-8894	9:00AM - 7:00PM (M-SUN)
Islander Mini Mart	Beach Road, San Antonio	1-670-234-5031	8:00AM - 7:00PM (M-SUN)
Islander Rent A Car	Airport Road, Dandan	1-670-235-8233	8:00AM - 5:00PM (M-F)
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Tinian Fuel Services	San Jose, Tinian	1-670-433-4428	8:00AM - 5:00PM (M-S) 8:00AM-12:00PM (SUN)
ROTA:			
Rota Merchandising Corporation	Songsong, Rota	1-670-532-0401	9:00AM - 2:00PM (M-F)

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Farewell and Thank You.

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Joeten Enterprises, Inc. extends our deepest gratitude to Saipan Tribune for 30 years of outstanding service to the CNMI. Your commitment to delivering news and strengthening our community will always be remembered.

Thank you for the memories and we wish you all the best.

From the management and staff of
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Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
Kilili: N. Korea crisis in 'dangerous new phase' PAGE 3
Nine young women to compete in 2018 Miss Marianas. PAGE 12
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RNV: We wholeheartedly deny the allegations. PAGE 3
Palacios OKs admin leave in the spirit of holiday season. PAGE 4
Merry Christmas!
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6 feet recommended social distancing
Travel ban unless for health reasons to be in place
PSS extends class suspension to April
NMC moves to online platforms
Activists call to oppose further NMI militarization. PAGE 2
Manglona postpones trial of Mayor Aldan, girlfriend assa. PAGE 3
LIFE & STYLE
WORLD
BUSINESS
INSIDE
GOT A NEWS TIP?

The news of the Saipan Tribune's closure has deeply saddened all of us at Century Insurance. For years, Saipan Tribune's dedication to delivering timely and meaningful stories has been an invaluable service to the CNMI, and its presence will be greatly missed.

It has been a privilege to work with Saipan Tribune and witness their commitment to informing and uplifting our community. Thank you for being an exceptional partner and for the tremendous impact you've made over the years.

We wish the entire staff and management the very best in your future endeavors.

With heartfelt appreciation,

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We at Marpac are deeply saddened to hear about the closure of the

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It has been an honor to collaborate with you and support your dedication to quality journalism and community service.

Thank you for being such a great business partner over the years!
Your contributions have left a lasting impact on the CNMI,
and we will always cherish the memories of our partnership.

Wishing the staff and management the very best in your future endeavors.

With sincere appreciation,

MAR PAC Inc.
EST. 1973

END

From page 14

Maharlika, a dedicated page focusing on Philippine news and features, and a locally tailored lifestyle segment.

The paper was also the first to include a full color cartoon page in its Sunday edition. Macario said the innovations Saipan Tribune implemented earned it a reputation of being the most well-designed newspaper in the Marianas.

In 1998, as it became the first newspaper in the Marianas to offer an online edition, the *Tribune* also made another first with the introduction of an opinion meter in its online edition.

As the publication's readership expanded, local businesses increasingly recognized the *Tribune* as a premier advertising platform, driving robust growth in advertising revenue and market penetration.

Virginia "Gina" Pabellon, a 13-year veteran of the newspaper and former sales and circulation manager, said the newspaper strategically bolstered advertiser confidence through two key initiatives—special supplements launched in 1995 and the introduction of local business feature stories in 2002. Collectively, this enhanced the publication's editorial depth and appeal. Eventually, the *Tribune* became the dominant advertising platform, gaining 70% of the local advertising market share.

"By leveraging our partnerships with advertisers and the community, the newspaper was able to gain financial stability. This strong advertising support also helped the *Tribune* weather economic uncertainties and the competition we faced from other media," said Pabellon.

It is this robust advertising revenue stream that allowed the Tribune to expand its publication frequency from twice weekly to a daily newspaper, Pabellon explained. However, in 2007, economic challenges and the increasing rise in social and digital media use necessitated a return to five-day-a-week printing.

Also in 2007, the newspaper changed its corporate name from Pacific Publication & Printing Inc. to *Saipan Tribune* Inc. In 2010, Tribune broadened its reach with the launch of TAGA Sports, a dedicated sports magazine that aimed to celebrate and promote local athletic talent and achievements. Ten years later in 2020, the magazine became TAGA Plus, expanding to also feature lifestyle, tourism, personal finance, humor, and noteworthy stories with distinctly local flavor.

Lessons in resilience

The *Saipan Tribune*, like many regional media outlets, grappled with the dual threats of economic recession and the rapid rise of digital media platforms, which posed a significant hurdle to its traditional business model.

Beth Del Rosario, a former advertising sales manager, praised the *Tribune*'s resilience, highlighting how the newspaper successfully navigated the setbacks by diversifying its product offerings to better meet the evolving needs of advertisers and maximize their return on investment.

"We published numerous supplements on community-based topics that were both engaging and relevant to readers. This attracted advertisers eager to reach a targeted local audience. These supplements not only boosted our revenue but also helped us maintain a strong connection with the community during a difficult period," shared Del Rosario.

Significantly, the *Tribune* capitalized on the power of integrated marketing, offering advertising packages that provided advertisers with a more comprehensive and impactful reach. "This strategy allowed us to offer clients a seamless, multi-platform experience and remain competitive in an ever-evolving media landscape," said Del Rosario.

By consistently understanding and responding to the evolving needs of its customers, the Tribune demonstrated remarkable resilience, successfully navigating the devastating impacts of super typhoons Yutu and Soudelor, and weathering the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The key was adaptability and communication. We supported our clients by offering flexible solutions and we demonstrated to them the value of advertising using either the newspaper's print or digital media platforms. Our responsiveness also helped maintain advertiser confidence and kept the paper financially stable during uncertain times," Del Rosario explained.

Beyond financial considerations, the *Tribune* recognized its vital role in community communication. Mirasol Dayao, a former accounting and circulation manager, vividly recalls the newspaper's commitment to information dissemination during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the newspaper continued to produce its print edition.

"Beyond our regular advertisers, government agencies rely on the *Tribune* to publish procurement and bidding requirements. Without the printed newspaper, these agencies might fail to meet their regulatory obligations," Dayao explained.

A personal connection

Perry eloquently captured the *Tribune*'s broader significance. "A media outlet not only reports the news, but it also influences a community," she said.

Throughout its run, the publication became more than just a news source. For the local community, the *Tribune* became a community gathering place. Birthdays were announced, local achievements celebrated, and community concerns aired through its pages. Its classified sections, community events calendar, and opinion pages were integral to island communication.

It also shed light on complex issues on labor rights, immigration policies, and the economic impact of the tourism and garment industries. These issues would have remained obscured without the publication's dedicated local journalism.

The *Tribune*'s unique positioning as both a local and international publication was a result of its critical reporting on CNMI and regional issues affecting Micronesia.

Through balanced coverage, critical accountability reporting, and storytelling that informed and inspired, the *Saipan Tribune* contributed significantly to making the Marianas a stronger community.

The final chapter

The closure of the *Saipan Tribune* mirrors a global trend that has claimed numerous regional newspapers, highlighting the widespread challenges

See END on Page 31

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As you close this chapter, we honor the lasting legacy you leave behind—a legacy of integrity, connection, and service to the people of Saipan. While this marks the end of an era, the impact of your work will continue to be felt for years to come.

Thank you for your unwavering support and contribution to our island. We wish you every success and fulfillment in all future endeavors.

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VOICES OF THE NORTHERN MARIANAS:

Stories from *Saipan Tribune*

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Saipan Tribune staff during one of Triple J's Color Run events.

By TERI M. FLORES
Correspondent

In the tapestry of local journalism, *Saipan Tribune* was never just another newspaper. It was a living, breathing chronicler of the Northern Marianas, woven together by the passion, dedication, and unwavering commitment of its remarkable team.

The *Tribune*'s distinguishing feature wasn't found in its ink or paper, but in the hearts of its people. At its core was a profound understanding that journalism is more than reporting facts—it's about capturing the pulse of a community.

Visionary leadership

Saipan Tribune's reputation as a well-trusted source of news and information owes

See STORIES on Page 21

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We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Saipan Tribune for the many years of partnership and collaboration.

Your unwavering dedication to delivering quality journalism and your support for businesses like ours have been instrumental in building connections with our community. Through your features, advertisements, and stories, you have not only informed but also inspired and united the people of Saipan.

It has been an honor to work alongside you, and we will always cherish the professionalism, creativity, and shared values that have marked our relationship over the years.

As you close this chapter, we celebrate your contributions and the legacy you leave behind. We wish you the very best in your future endeavors and hope that your influence will continue to resonate across our island.

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STORIES

From page 20

much to the strategic leadership of its publishers, notably John S. Del Rosario, the late John DLG Pangelinan, Lynn Knight, and Eli Arago. While he was not officially named publisher, the late Arago oversaw the newspaper while being the senior vice president for finance at Tan Holdings.

Del Rosario is remembered for establishing a foundational vision for *Saipan Tribune*, emphasizing the newspaper's crucial role as a vital voice within the local community. He led the newspaper with a conviction deeply rooted in specifically, understanding the Northern Marianas and in general, the Micronesian region. His strategic approach went beyond mere management, prioritizing the delivery of accurate, timely news that would empower and inform the community.

Virginia "Gina" Pabellon, the former sales and circulation manager and a 13-year veteran of the newspaper emphasizes Del Rosario's care for his team, creating a collaborative work environment and opportunities for professional growth and development. "Under his leadership, I was able to learn, grow, and pursue my passion for connecting with people and driving sales revenue. I am grateful for his trust and guidance and the skills I gained under his leadership were invaluable."

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The *Saipan Tribune* team during one of the quarterly beach clean ups as part of the I Care I Give Back projects of TanHoldings.

On the other hand, former publisher John DLG Pangelinan who was affectionately known as JP, embodied Saipan Tribune's spirit. Though not a trained journalist, JP carried on Del Rosario's vision of ensuring that the publication remained deeply connected to local sensitivities. His wisdom and humor permeated the newsroom, creating an environment of trust and camaraderie.

Knight, another former publisher and vice president, fondly recalls JP's collaborative spirit. "He would sometimes come to me with questions about journalism or operations, particularly if there was something he was perplexed about and the opportunity to collaborate was something I treasured in my job. I loved working with him and knowing him as a friend."

JP was also renowned for his thoughtful gestures, often surprising team members with personalized gifts that demonstrated his genuine appreciation. Knight remembers JP giving her and her two daughters a karaoke machine with some of his favorite songs. In one memorable instance, he also gifted this correspondent a VCR player, knowing it would bring joy to my young son who was passionate about anime.

Complementing JP's approach was the fair and strategic leadership of Arago. As Puy Macario, the newspaper's former operations manager, noted, "Trust and confidence" were the most valuable assets of both JP and Arago.

Mirasol Dayao, a former accounting and circulations manager, remembers Arago for his inspirational leadership and positivity, "After 25 years of working alongside Eli at the *Saipan Tribune*, I can confidently say he was more than just a leader—he was a beacon of compassion and integrity. He extended a genuine invitation for every team member to be heard, valued, and empowered. Eli truly lived by Phil Jackson's philosophy that the strength of our newsroom was in each individual's unique contribution."

Mark Rabago, editor of *Saipan Tribune*, refers to Arago as the newspaper's "champion." Arago continued the legacy left by his predecessors. "Despite always saying he didn't know anything about running the newspaper, Eli knew pretty well the role Saipan Tribune plays in the community and its importance in keeping the community informed," said Rabago.

Formidable editorial team

What truly set the newspaper apart is recognizing that its strength lay in its people. Its editors, writers, graphic artists, delivery personnel, finance staff, and sales teams were united by a commitment to journalistic excellence.

Editors like Fermin Meriang, Beverly Lomosad. Cookie Micaller, Aldwin Fajardo, Jayvee Vallejera, and Mark Rabago weren't just news professionals; they were storytellers who understood the delicate art of local reporting. With remarkable sensitivity, these editors helped navigate the newspaper's professional team of reporters and correspondents to the complex landscape of island politics and community dynamics.

As one of *Saipan Tribune*'s former editors, Fajardo assumed editor duties in 1999 with Micaller's departure. Fajardo's unexpected ascent to the editor's chair proved to be a challenging yet rewarding period. "This environment forced me to navigate my responsibilities, ensuring that the team produced compelling stories while managing interpersonal conflicts diplomatically. This experience reinforced my ability to lead under pressure, advocate for diversity, and ensure that my work spoke for itself—emphasizing the power of persistence in overcoming prejudices."

The publication's editorial team formed part of the CNMI's tight-knit community of journalists committed to telling important stories. Catherine Perry, owner of the public relations firm Integrity Communications and former broadcast journalist, frequently collaborated with *Saipan Tribune* reporters. Perry fondly remembered the camaraderie. "Although everyone hoped for the 'scoop' there was a strong

See STORIES on Page 22

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THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

As you bring this chapter to a close, Saipan Shipping Company, Inc. (Saiship) would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for the incredible partnership we've shared over the years. Your dedication to journalism and your unwavering service to our community have been truly inspiring.

The Saipan Tribune has been more than just a source of news—it has been a cornerstone of our island, connecting people and sharing stories that matter. We are proud to have collaborated with you and deeply value the trust and support you've shown us throughout the years.

While it's difficult to say goodbye, the legacy you've created will continue to resonate in our community. We wish you all the best in your next endeavors

From the staff and management

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STORIES

From page 21

sense that we all just wanted to get the most important stories of the day out to our viewers and readers," said Perry.

For both Pabellon and Dayao, it is the sense of family they shared with *Saipan Tribune* team which they will miss the most. "We had such a strong bond, built on things like our shared love for selfies, good food, and casual chats. We'd often get together for beach cleanups, fun runs, and weekend hikes. But most importantly, it was our shared passion for our work that truly brought us together. It was easy to tackle any task or assignment knowing that we were all in this together as a team," said Dayao.

Saipan Tribune wasn't just reporting news; it was preserving history. As Vallejera poignantly put it, the paper was "the recorder of the first draft of CNMI history." Its archives became a crucial resource for legal, historical, and academic research.

The stories found in the pages of the *Saipan Tribune* are more than personal narratives. Each of these stories represented a microcosm of journalism's evolution in the digital age—a story of adaptability, passion, and commitment to documenting community stories.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Saipan Tribune team participating in the JP Hero Run with the late honorary consul and *Saipan Tribune* publisher Eli Arago. The JP Hero Run was held in honor of the late publisher John DLG Pangelinan.

THE NEWSMAKERS

Jayvee Vallejera, former managing editor

Jayvee Vallejera joins the rank of the very few reporters who can claim to have been as deeply embedded in a community's narrative. What started as a modest assignment at a local newspaper became, across 22 remarkable years, a personal journalistic journey that charted both his own transformation and the evolving narrative of the Northern Marianas.

Beginning in June 2001 until he left in March 2024, Vallera's work serves as a testament to the art of local journalism. Drawing from his four-year experience as a reporter, he rose through the ranks to become the long-standing editorial leader of the Saipan Tribune, a position he held with distinction for 22 years. Since leaving *Saipan Tribune*, Vallejera has continued to contribute to *Marianas Variety* and *Pacific Times*, a Guam-based publication.

Vallejera's journey began far from the tropical shores of Saipan. He was a desk editor at *TODAY*, a Manila-based national newspaper and a news director at a radio station in the Visayas which is the southern region of the Philippines. These urban, air-conditioned roles could not have prepared him for the immersive reporting experience that awaited him on Saipan.

"I was immediately thrown to the deep end," Vallejera recalls of his early days at *Saipan Tribune*. His initial assignment was nothing short of comprehensive—covering the entire Capitol Hill beat. From the Governor's Office to the Legislature, from the NMI Retirement Fund to various government departments, Vallejera was thrust into a complex world of island politics and governance. "There was no gentle introduction, no handholding. I had to learn quickly, driven by the urgency of news reporting"

Mentors like Edith Alejandro, Mark Rabago, and Teri M. Flores became his guides, helping him navigate the intricate local landscape. Rabago left an impression with his encyclopedic memory of Saipan Tribune stories—a walking archive of the publication's history.

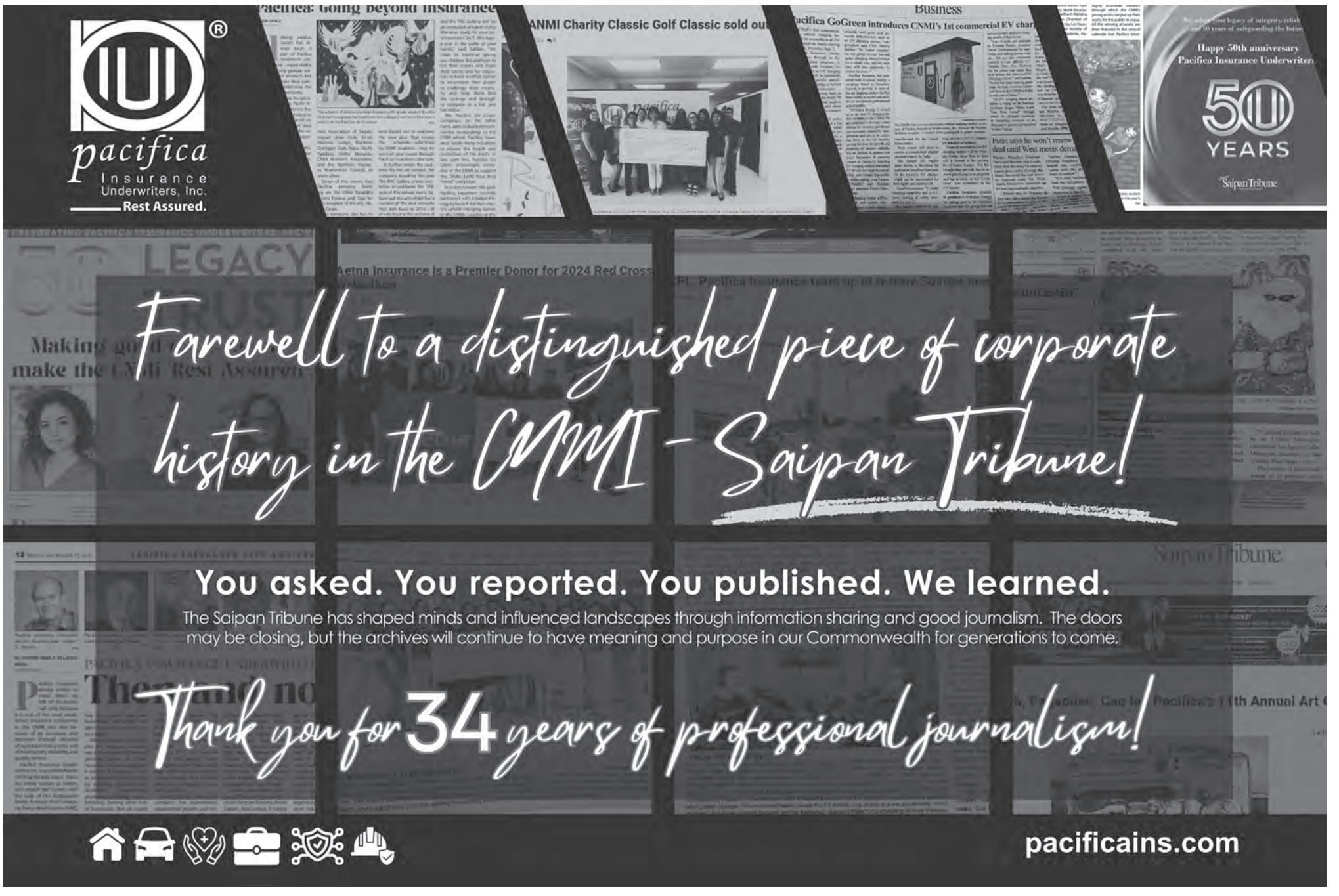
The transition from desk-bound editor to field reporter was life changing. Vallejera describes his Saipan experience as "hot, taking a lot of work, and requiring constant driving," but ultimately revealing the "nitty-gritty yet exciting world of news gathering." It was a far cry from his previous roles, where news was processed from the comfort of an air-conditioned room.

Some of his most memorable moments showcase his tenacity as a journalist. One story stands out—his pursuit of an elusive official who consistently avoided his inquiries. Undeterred, Vallejera camped out at the rear exit of the official's building, watching like a hawk. When the official finally emerged, Vallejera was ready, securing the interview and completing his story.

Vallejera names a feature on the Tinian Dynasty Hotel & Casino as another unforgettable assignment. As part of his coverage, the hotel prepared a feast—enough food to feed 30-50 people across five large tables. For Vallejera, a self-proclaimed picky eater, it was both a challenge and a humorous memory.

The pinnacle of his reporting career might well be the coverage of Japanese Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko's visit in June 2005. This was historically significant—the first time a Japanese monarch visited a World War II battlefield outside Japan. What made this coverage extraordinary was not just the historical moment, but the collaborative spirit of *Saipan Tribune*'s reporters, who worked seamlessly to provide the most

See STORIES on Page 23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STORIES

From page 22

extensive local coverage.

Vallejera was also passionate about elections coverage. He saw these events as more than just political contests—they were transformative moments that reshaped the CNMI's landscape. *Saipan Tribune* would meticulously plan coverage months in advance, with each reporter and editor becoming a crucial component of a well-oiled reporting machine.

His journalistic pursuits even led to memorable encounters like interviewing Leo Falcam, then-president of the Federated States of Micronesia. The interview required a U.S. Secret Service background check, an experience Vallejera remembers with a mix of excitement and professional pride.

Vallejera found himself at the cusp of the digital revolution in media when he transitioned from reporter to editor. The internet was young, digital technologies were emerging, and Saipan Tribune was at the forefront of these changes. Digital photographs were a novelty, with image sizes rarely exceeding one megabyte. Social media was transforming how people consumed news. Vallejera embraced these technological shifts, continuously teaching himself new skills.

As *Saipan Tribune* prepares to close at the end of 2024, Vallejera reflects on the publication's legacy. He sees the newspaper not just as a daily publication, but as a crucial recorder of CNMI's first drafts of history. *Saipan Tribune*'s website, with its comprehensive search capabilities, became a vital resource for legal, historical, and academic researchers.

His wish is simple yet profound—that the *Tribune*'s digital archive will not vanish but remain accessible, offering "virtual immortality" and serving as a gift to future researchers and historians.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Saipan Tribune team during one of the Liberation Day parades on Saipan.

Mark Rabago, managing editor

Mark Rabago joined the *Saipan Tribune* in 2001, initially serving as a beat reporter before transitioning to sports coverage. The sports department's inception was somewhat serendipitous, sparked by the necessity of covering the Mobil Games. "Born out of necessity," Rabago recalls. "I was covering local beats before Saipan hosted the Mobil Games. I ended up doing the coverage because we needed someone to report on the event."

Rabago's career path at *Saipan Tribune* has been remarkable. He became the sports editor just one year after joining the newspaper. From 2004 to 2023, he served as associate editor, and he now holds the position of managing editor.

Among the career highlights Rabago cherishes is his coverage of the 2022 South Pacific Mini Games in Suva, Fiji. This assignment was particularly significant as it marked his first off-island coverage for the newspaper. He wrote and filed stories throughout the event, making it a memorable professional experience.

The 2006 Micronesian Games on Saipan also holds a special place in his memories. "I was thrilled to cover both the CNMI's and international athletes competing on home soil," he said. Rabago's portfolio of memorable sporting events includes diverse competitions like the Tagaman, XTERRA Saipan, professional wrestling, Little League regionals, track and field championships, and FIBA tournaments.

Rabago describes *Saipan Tribune*'s sports reporting as "grass roots sports reporting at its best," noting that when he began, there was little competition in the field. "Sports reporting was easy because there was no one else doing it," said Rabago.

He takes pride in mentoring and developing a new generation of local sports journalists, including Shan Seman, Brad Ruszala, Walter Sutherland, and Leigh Gases. These "home-grown" reporters represent his commitment to nurturing local talent.

Despite the constant pressure of newsroom deadlines, Rabago fondly remembers his work environment. "There were no professional jealousies, and everyone did their part." While acknowledging the challenges of his editorial roles, he maintains an optimistic perspective. "It made me a better person, it was hard, but at the end of the day, what doesn't kill you only makes you stronger."

Rabago envisions *Saipan Tribune* being remembered as a media outlet that reported news objectively, presenting both sides of every story without compromise. While focusing on local news, it also comprehensively covered sports, community events, business, and lifestyle happenings on the Northern Marianas.

Ferdie dela Torre, former senior reporter

Ferdie Dela Torre holds the distinction of being the newspaper's senior reporter. From November 2005 until his departure in May 2024, Dela Torre was the eyes and ears of *Saipan Tribune*. In June 2024, he transitioned to become the newspaper's Las Vegas-based correspondent.

Dela Torre's early beats at *Saipan Tribune* were the quintessential boots-on-the-ground experiences—writing comprehensively about the local justice system, cops and courts, and labor and immigration issues. Eventually, Dela Torre assumed the Capitol Hill beat covering the Governor's Office, the Legislature, and various government agencies.

During his three decades of writing about the Northern Marianas, two stories stand out as particularly impactful. The Larry Hillblom saga, a decades-long legal battle over the estate of the late billionaire, which captivated the island and the world.

Dela Torre was there—from Hillblom's tragic disappearance to the arduous legal battle over his vast estate—making this a defining chapter of his career. "As the only reporter consistently covering the probate proceedings, I witnessed firsthand the intricate legal maneuvering and the profound impact on the lives of Hillblom's heirs. This experience cemented my belief in the CNMI Judiciary's capacity to handle complex legal matters.

Dela Torre's exhaustive coverage of the Hillblom case provided him with the unique opportunity to collaborate with journalists from around the world. His work on this complex story garnered significant recognition, including being featured in James Scurlock's book, "King Larry: The Life and Ruins of a Billionaire Genius," and the documentary film, "Shadow Billionaire."

Then came the Kazuyoshi Miura saga, a gripping tale of international intrigue. For seven months in 2008, Dela Torre was witness to the unprecedented media frenzy that surrounded Miura's arrest and extradition. For the second time, Dela Torre found himself again thrust into the spotlight as a story within the story. "I became friends with members of the Japanese media," said Dela Torre, still in disbelief. "Their coverage was so extensive that two of them even featured me in their own reports, documenting my daily routine as I covered the Miura case."

Dela Torre also counts the impeachment proceedings of then-Northern Marianas governor Ralph DLG Torres as another important moment in his career. The governor was impeached for his alleged excessive travel and misuse of public funds in violation of local procurement regulations. "It was sobering to see how this case laid bare the deep political divisions that gripped the community, the political maneuvering, the intense public debate, and the ultimate outcome of the trial," said Dela Torre.

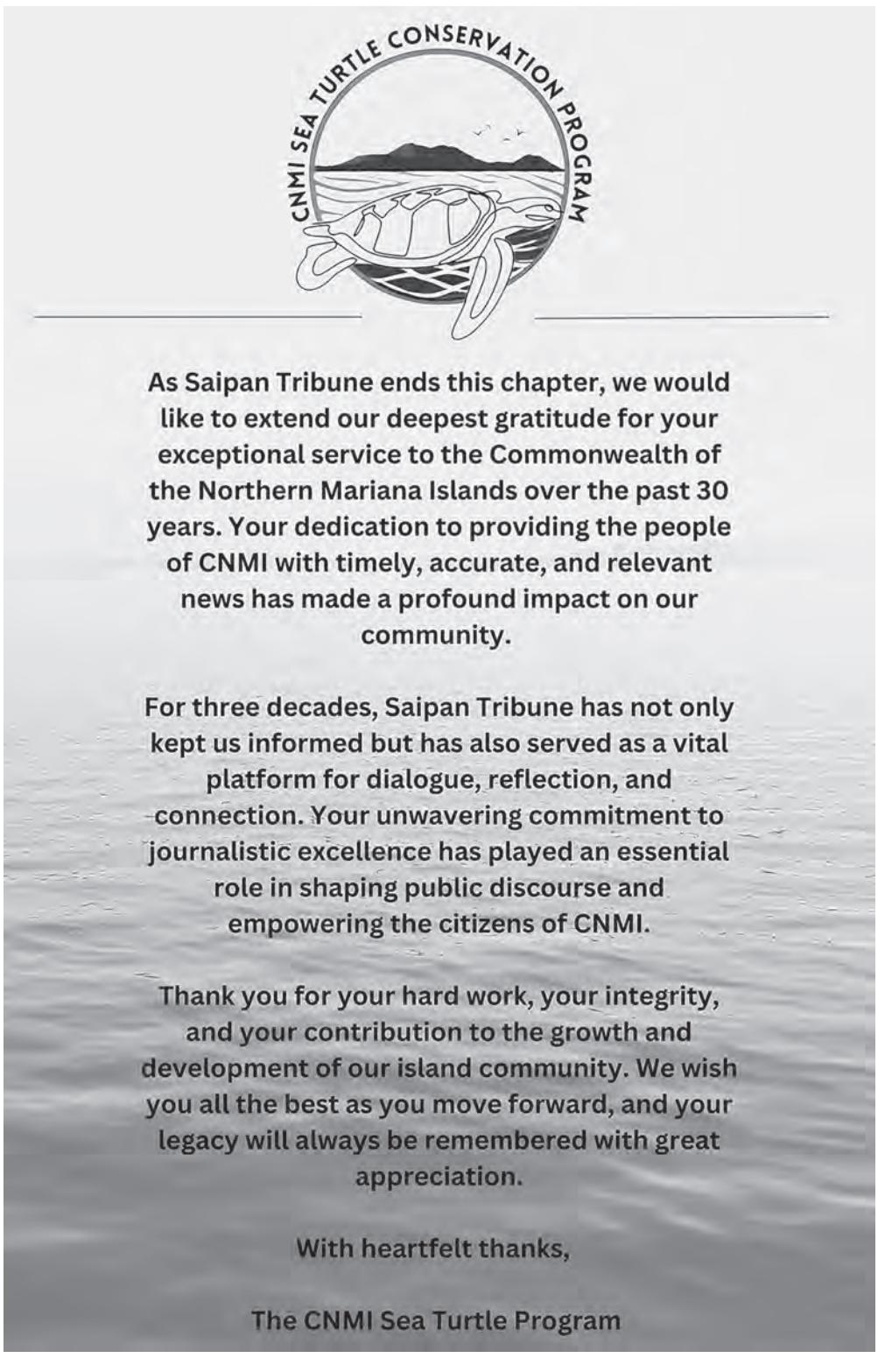
Throughout his career, Dela Torre learned the importance of building trust and respect of both his sources and the community as crucial in cultivating relationships and gaining access to information. "I've always strived for accuracy and fairness despite the challenges of the job including the occasional encounters with individuals who misunderstand the role of the press."

Dela Torre considers the Saipan Tribune as more than just a workplace. For him, it's a family. "The camaraderie among the team, from the delivery drivers to the editors, was exceptional. We were a cohesive team, and we worked together seamlessly. We valued our individual roles in bringing the news to our readers," said Dela Torre.

For Dela Torre, it is the *Saipan Tribune*'s commitment to quality journalism that has earned the respect and trust of the community and the international media. While the recent closure is a significant loss, Dela Torre believes it is merely a temporary hiatus.

"The newspaper's closure is a significant loss but I believe it is merely a temporary setback. The community will continue to need an independent and reliable local news source. *Saipan Tribune*'s role

See STORIES on Page 24


CNMI SEA TURTLE CONSERVATION PROGRAM
As Saipan Tribune ends this chapter, we would like to extend our deepest gratitude for your exceptional service to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands over the past 30 years. Your dedication to providing the people of CNMI with timely, accurate, and relevant news has made a profound impact on our community.
For three decades, Saipan Tribune has not only kept us informed but has also served as a vital platform for dialogue, reflection, and connection. Your unwavering commitment to journalistic excellence has played an essential role in shaping public discourse and empowering the citizens of CNMI.
Thank you for your hard work, your integrity, and your contribution to the growth and development of our island community. We wish you all the best as you move forward, and your legacy will always be remembered with great appreciation.
With heartfelt thanks,
The CNMI Sea Turtle Program

STORIES

From page 23

as a public forum for the community is indispensable, and I am confident that it will rise again, stronger than before."

Marvic Cagurangan, former reporter

Marvic Cagurangan's tenure as a reporter at *Saipan Tribune* may have been brief, spanning only a few months in late 1999. In 2012, Cagurangan became a freelance reporter for the newspaper. Having gained valuable experience in the journalism field, Cagurangan founded *Pacific Times*, a regional newspaper based in Guam, in 2016. She continues to lead the publication as its publisher.

Cagurangan recalls that covering the CNMI judiciary and local education beats during her time at *Saipan Tribune* presented its unique set of challenges. "Meeting deadlines while trying to gather all the information you need from tons of documents within a limited amount of time was always a challenge. Doing research and background checks in the pre-Google era was a real pain. We didn't have the luxury of instant access to information that we have today."

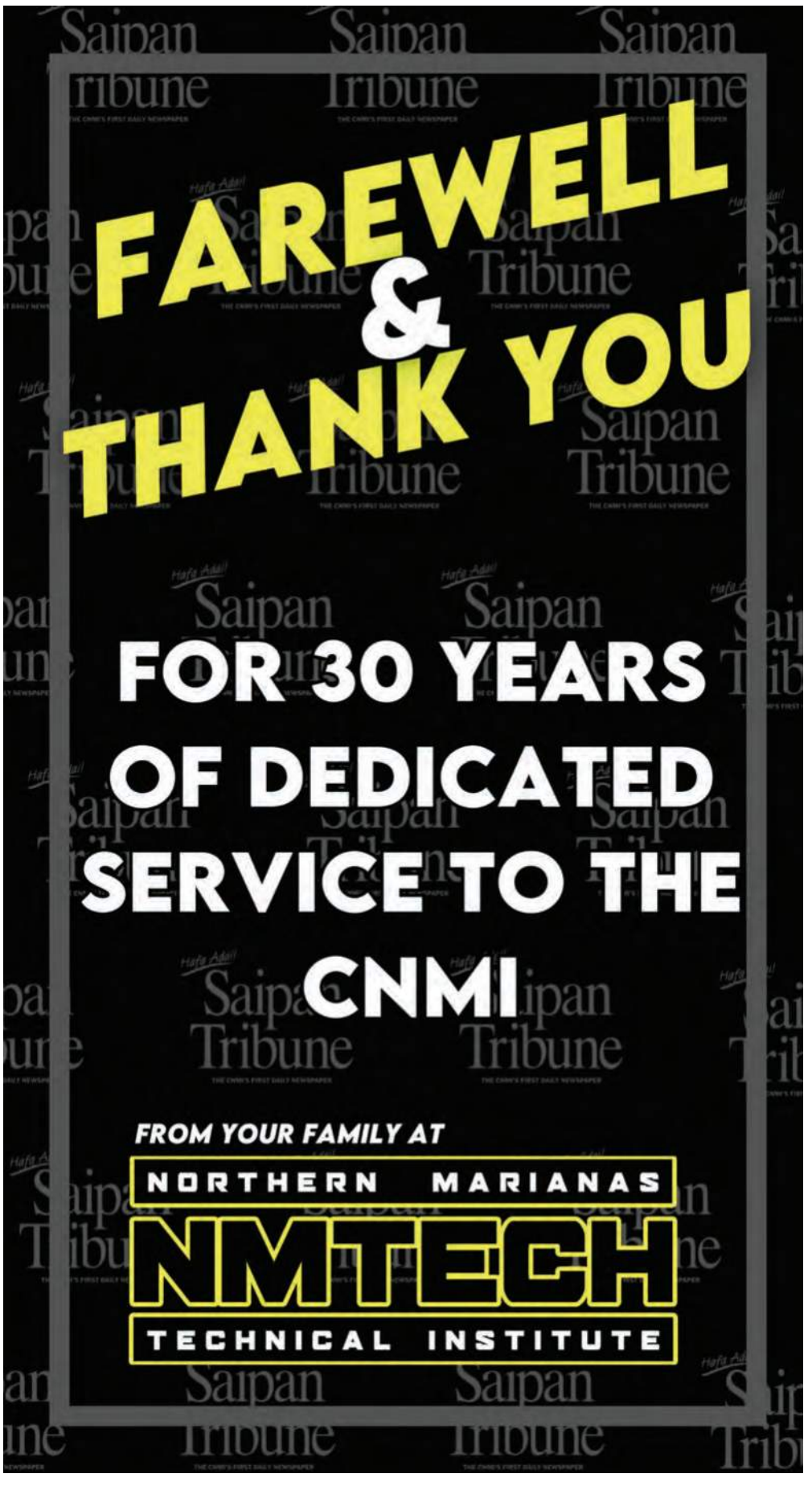
Her most memorable assignment involved the intricate Larry Hillblom case, a legal labyrinth that required meticulous research and thoughtful story construction. Working under pressure with limited resources and tight deadlines, Cagurangan honed her ability to distill complex legal proceedings into compelling and understandable stories for the public.

Despite these hurdles, Cagurangan thrived. "Being out in the field, interviewing people from all walks of life, helped a reporter gain self-confidence," said Cagurangan. "This job offers an incredible opportunity to learn new things every day. You get a front-row seat to history as it unfolds. You get to see both sides of a story, and every story offers new information. You become a repository of facts and knowledge. You get to meet interesting people, who may convey nuggets of wisdom that become part of you."

Cagurangan's time at Saipan Tribune coincided with the leadership of John S. del Rosario as publisher while Cookie Micaller was the editor. "John managed the newsroom independently," Cagurangan recalls. "He would sometimes send press releases from Tan Holdings and Cookie would publish them when she saw fit. John got disappointed at times when he saw a company press release buried inside, but he never imposed on the staff."

Cagurangan acknowledges that *Saipan Tribune* faced criticism for its perceived close ties to Tan Holdings. However, she believes that under Micaller's editorship, the paper began to earn a more independent voice. "Despite its limited resources, *Saipan Tribune* managed to cover community events and important stories affecting the community."

The closure of the *Saipan Tribune* deeply saddened Cagurangan. "It was a respectable community publication," she laments. "It truly broke my heart when I learned *Saipan Tribune* was folding, not only because I was briefly part of it but more so because it made me realize more that journalism has depleting chances of survival in the new world. I cannot imagine a community—or the entire world for that matter—without a newspaper or any form of news organization. I dread this apocalypse."



Liberty Arand, former reporter

Liberty Arand spent five years as a reporter for *Saipan Tribune* from 2002 to 2007, covering a wide range of beats from community events and government agencies to the courts and local politics. This diverse experience provided Arand with a unique perspective on the Northern Marianas and the challenges facing its people.

One of her most memorable assignments was covering the 2004 visit of Paul Tibbets, the pilot of the Enola Gay, the aircraft that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. "It was a highly anticipated visit," recalls Arand. "A rare chance to see and write about a living man who played a major role in world history." This experience underscored the profound historical significance of the Northern Marianas, particularly Tinian, in the context of World War II.

However, other coverages offered a more sobering reflection of the broader uncertainties faced by the community at that time. Arand's reporting on the Northern Marianas College, for instance, highlighted the institution's struggles with accreditation, financial instability, and leadership turnover. "When I covered NMC, it faced accrediting problems, huge financial liabilities, and frequent turnover of presidents. At that time, Kenneth Wright was the latest to be hired as president in the summer of 2002, and in less than two years, he was let go. NMC was trending in those days." These challenges mirrored the broader uncertainties faced by the community at that time.

Another significant story during Arand's tenure involved the termination of Marianas Public Lands Authority commissioner Bertha Deleon Guerrero. This event sparked a legal battle that ultimately resulted in a settlement, shedding light on the complexities of governance and the challenges faced by public officials.

Building trust with her sources was crucial for Arand's success as a reporter. "There was a time that people didn't think their point of view would see print. To overcome this, I made sure to reach out directly to people with doubts and included them as resource people in my news writing. They became more open and over time, they realized that the field looked fair and balanced," said Arand.

Living and working in the Northern Marianas was an unforgettable experience for Arand. "Living on Saipan alone is a standout in my store of memories, not only because of the CNMI's rich history and natural beauty but also, and more importantly, its great people, many of whom I had a chance to know while working there," she reminisces. "The Northern Marianas is a mini-me of the U.S., so my living experience there was most helpful and very much appreciated."

Arand has fond recollections of the camaraderie working with her colleagues at *Saipan Tribune*. "From the editorial side, there was a strong desire to be excellent in what we were doing, to pursue the news as it happened, and be on top of our game. There was great camaraderie among the editors and reporters. We were friends, not rivals," said Arand. "This collaborative spirit undoubtedly contributed to the *Tribune*'s success as a trusted source of information for the community."

Arand believes that the combination of management support and the handwork of its employees has made *Saipan Tribune* a respected and trusted publication, not only by local readers but also by international media outlets. "When *Saipan Tribune* opened its arms wider to the community, the people noticed and gave back," said Arand.

Since leaving the Northern Marianas in 2007, Arand has dedicated herself to raising her family in Texas. She homeschools her two children, now 16 and 12, cultivating a rich and fulfilling home-learning environment.

Looking back, Arand hopes that *Saipan Tribune* will be remembered as "a great local newspaper that served the CNMI people well." She envisions a future for *Saipan Tribune* in the digital realm, recognizing the evolving media landscape. "Here's hoping that Saipan Tribune would consider going fully digital. I'll be cheering for you!

Rhony Laigo, former reporter

Rhony Laigo was a pioneering reporter at the *Saipan Tribune* during its formative years, contributing his talents as a sportswriter from 1991 to 1993.

"Those were exciting times," recalls Laigo. "I had the privilege of covering the island's vibrant sporting scene, showcasing the talents of local athletes and capturing the energy of the games." Laigo remembers late nights at basketball tournaments and Saipan Major League games, interviewing winners and those who had made impactful plays. "It was a rewarding experience to highlight the achievements of these dedicated individuals and contribute to the community's sporting spirit."

Laigo's time at *Saipan Tribune* coincided with a period of significant growth for the newspaper. His optimism for the *Saipan Tribune*'s future was fueled by its ownership at the time. "I had high expectations for the paper. With Larry Hillblom as the majority owner, I believed it had the potential that it would run for more than 30 years."

Life on Saipan during those years was idyllic. "Working on Saipan was incomparable," Laigo recalls fondly. "Short commutes, friendly interactions with government officials, and a vibrant social scene made life enjoyable. Steaks and lots of free food were plentiful during festivities, and weekend beach barbecues were a regular occurrence."

Perhaps the most significant life-changing event during Laigo's time on Saipan was meeting his wife, Ruth, which led to the joys of fatherhood with the birth of their two daughters, Angelle and Karina. "Angelle now owns a record store and works as a contract specialist, while Karina is a successful attorney specializing in Child Care Law in Berkeley, California," shares Laigo.

After leaving Saipan in 1995, Laigo pursued a successful career in journalism

See STORIES on Page 25

STORIES

From page 24

on the U.S. mainland, contributing to several Filipino American newspapers and making appearances on local television programs. However, in 2015, he transitioned into the field of technology as a senior software developer for Baylor Scott and White, a leading healthcare provider in Texas.

Even after leaving Saipan, Laigo followed the careers of his peers and maintained a connection with the island and its news. "I always visited the websites of the *Saipan Tribune* and other local publications."

Reflecting on the changing media landscape, Laigo acknowledges the challenges faced by traditional print media. "But just like here in the mainland, where very few now read the newspaper that forced me to go back to school and take up IT courses, *Saipan Tribune*'s fate was expected. It was just a matter of time," said Laigo.

Beth Del Rosario, former advertising sales manager

Beth Del Rosario's career with the *Saipan Tribune* spanned 12 impactful years, from 2010 to 2022. Starting as an advertising sales agent, she quickly climbed the ranks, ultimately assuming the role of advertising sales manager. Today, she continues to excel in the marketing field, currently serving as an account manager at a prominent marketing company in Cincinnati.

Looking back on her time at *Saipan Tribune*, Del Rosario emphasizes the invaluable opportunities for personal and professional growth. "What stands out most is the incredible opportunity I had to meet and collaborate with so many brilliant individuals in the local business community," said Del Rosario. "The work was challenging, but incredibly rewarding, fostering meaningful relationships that extended beyond the confines of business."

It was at *Saipan Tribune* where Del Rosario learned firsthand the true value of customer relations. "It wasn't just about delivering results. It was about nurturing trust and forging lasting bonds with our clients. Every successful project was a testament to the teamwork and collaboration that went into it, both with clients and colleagues."

Del Rosario's dedication to her clients, her ability to build strong relationships, and her consistent delivery of results earned her the respect and admiration of both her clients and her coworkers. "She is the type who is so good at her job that she can sell ice to an Eskimo," is how sales supervisor Nhorleen Lilles aptly describes Del Rosario, highlighting her exceptional salesmanship and persuasive skills.

Lilles, who worked alongside Del Rosario for six years, fondly recalls her culinary talents. 'She was like a mother figure to us, always cooking delicious meals for the team. Her specialties weren't your typical fare—she always brought something unique and special to share."

The camaraderie within the *Saipan Tribune* team was a defining aspect of Del Rosario's experience. "There was a real sense of belonging and friendship. Whether it was a casual chat over lunch or working late to meet a deadline, the bond we shared made our time together not just productive but enjoyable. This positive, inclusive atmosphere contributed significantly to our success."

Del Rosario also values the deep connection she forged with the local community. "The work we did wasn't just about business; it was about serving the people around us. Whether through local advertising, supporting small businesses, or providing information that mattered to our readers, there was always a real sense of purpose behind what we did" explains Del Rosario.

Del Rosario acknowledges, "While there were certainly challenges, the newspaper demonstrated remarkable resilience. We adapted to the changing media landscape by diversifying our product offerings, ensuring that we met the evolving needs of our advertisers and maximized their return on investment."

Reflecting on her time at *Saipan Tribune*, Del Rosario expresses sincere gratitude to her colleagues. "I will miss the sense of community and the strong, collaborative culture we built together," she shares. "It wasn't just about the work —it was about the people, the relationships, and the shared commitment to delivering excellence."

Finally, Del Rosario extends her appreciation to the advertisers who supported *Saipan Tribune* throughout the years. "Your continued commitment to advertising with us allowed us to stay connected with our community and continue delivering valuable content. Your support will always be remembered and deeply appreciated."

Jon March Ong, circulations clerk

For 23 years, Jon March Ong was a dedicated member of the *Tribune*'s circulation department. As circulation clerk, Ong played a crucial role in ensuring the newspaper reached its readers across the island—from homes and offices to local stores.

Ong remembers the dedication of the newspaper's circulation team, especially in the aftermath of widespread devastation from super typhoons Yutu and Soudelor. "We never stopped delivering. Despite facing heavy rain, debris-strewn roads, and limited resources, our team worked tirelessly to ensure that our customers received their *Saipan Tribune* on time, every single day. This commitment to our readers, even in the face of adversity, was a defining characteristic of the *Saipan Tribune*."

Beyond the daily grind of distribution, Ong cherishes the strong sense of camaraderie that existed within Saipan Tribune team. "We treated each other like family," said Ong. "We were there for each other during both triumphs and setbacks. This sense of support and camaraderie, extending even to our families, is something I will truly miss."

Leaving *Saipan Tribune* in August was a difficult decision. "It was with a heavy heart that I departed," Ong admits. "While I am now busy with my new life in California, I will always look back fondly on my time at Saipan Tribune."

Ong expresses his sincere gratitude to the Tribune and its owner, Jerry Tan. "I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to have been part of *Saipan Tribune* family," he says. "The kindness and support I received from everyone on the team will always be cherished."

Angel "Jonjie" Reyes, art director

Jonjie Reyes was a pioneering staff at the *Saipan Tribune* during its formative years when he joined as a graphic artist in 1993. Reyes joined *Saipan Tribune* during a challenging period in his life and he considers his employment in the publication a blessing in disguise. "I was facing a difficult labor case with a previous employer and *Saipan Tribune*'s production manager, Dong Camacho, offered me stability and a sense of purpose when I needed it most." After three years, Reyes was offered a permanent position, a gesture he deeply appreciates.

As one of its longtime art directors, a position he held between June 2008 until June 2016, Reyes witnessed firsthand *Saipan Tribune*'s evolution from a fledgling publication to a respected voice in the Northern Marianas.

During his time at *Saipan Tribune*, Reyes witnessed significant changes, from shifts in editorial leadership to the constant evolution of technology. "I saw a lot of turnovers, from publishers and editors to editorial staff. But throughout these changes, *Saipan Tribune* consistently strived to improve its content and print quality." The inclusion of Associated Press content as a turning point for the newspaper. "It gave our readers a global perspective," recalls Reyes.

Reyes attributes *Saipan Tribune*'s longevity to its ability to adapt. "We started as a free newspaper with a small readership but we gradually built a loyal following through consistent quality and our commitment to serving the community."

Reyes has fond memories working at the newspaper. "It was an incredible experience. The island's vibrant community, the camaraderie within *Saipan Tribune* newsroom, and the opportunity to contribute to the island's growth were invaluable."

Now semi-retired and working as an independent contractor in San Diego, Reyes looks back at his time with the *Saipan Tribune* with a mixture of pride and nostalgia. "It was a privilege to be a part of *Saipan Tribune*'s story and helping create its visual identity, and to witness its impact on the community."

■■■

For the men and women of *Saipan Tribune*, journalism is not just a profession, but a calling. It's about telling stories that matter, representing a community with accuracy and compassion, and maintaining an unwavering commitment to the truth. Their careers stand as a powerful reminder that journalism is about more than just reporting events—it's about understanding and connecting with the human stories behind those events.

As the *Tribune* prepares to close its print edition, its legacy is not measured in newspapers sold, but in stories told, communities connected, and truths revealed. It stands as a testament to the power of local journalism—a mirror reflecting the hopes, challenges, and triumphs of the CNMI.

The *Saipan Tribune* was more than a newspaper. It was a community institution, a historical record, and a beacon of journalistic integrity.

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Yaong Corporation extends its heartfelt thanks to the Saipan Tribune for years of partnership and support.

Your dedication to connecting the community and uplifting local businesses has been invaluable. It has been an honor to collaborate with such a trusted publication that has played a vital role in shaping Saipan.

We wish you all the best as you close this chapter and move forward. Thank you for your lasting impact and contributions.

With appreciation,
Yaong Corporation

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DAILY WHOLESALE DELIVERY

Saying goodbye: Messages from the community

By NHORLEEN BITCO LILLES
Special to the Saipan Tribune

After more than three decades of dedicated service to the CNMI, *Saipan Tribune* is closing its doors.

Established in 1990, *Saipan Tribune* has been a steadfast source of news, delivering in-depth reporting, community stories, and vital information to the people of Saipan and beyond. Over the years, it has chronicled the islands; history, celebrated its culture, and served as a platform for diverse voices. The decision to cease operations reflects the ongoing challenges faced by the newspaper industry, but *Saipan Tribune*'s legacy as a trusted pillar of the CNMI community will undoubtedly endure.

We've reached out to our community, and here are their heartfelt messages about the closure—a testament to the impact this publication has had on their lives.

■■■

Our profound appreciation goes out to *Saipan Tribune* and its hardworking professional management team, administrative staff, and unbiased reporters for their many years of services and commitment in keeping the CNMI and others around the world, current local and global news. After more than 30 years, *Saipan Tribune* has brought hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, of news reports into our homes, offices, and personal spaces. Thank you for keeping us informed by bringing current news to us almost every morning for more than thirty years.

It saddened us when we learned that *Saipan Tribune* would be publishing its last newspaper on Dec. 31, 2024. We would soon no longer pick up two newspapers from the local newsstands or read them online, but we will always remember the important and great news reporting from *Saipan Tribune*. We will certainly miss *Saipan Tribune* and with that, we wish its management team, administrative staff, and reporters the best of luck in all their future pursuits.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

An undated *Saipan Tribune* photo after one of their Christmas parties.

The great memories and your friendship will remain with us forever.

—David M. Apatang, CNMI lieutenant governor

■■■

As *Saipan Tribune* prepares to close its doors, I find myself reflecting on nearly a decade of working alongside some of the most talented and dedicated individuals I've ever met. My time at *Saipan Tribune* was not just a job—it was, without a doubt, the best job of my professional career. It was a transformative chapter of my life, filled with personal growth, collaboration, and a steadfast commitment to not only being a part of, but also serving, the community.

When I joined *Saipan Tribune*, I walked into a newsroom buzzing with energy, ideas, and passion. It was here that I found a family of colleagues who brought their creativity, dedication, and expertise to every article, page, advertisement, supplement, and story we published. The goal was always to produce quality products for our consumers—from the design of ads, to the layout of the pages (which, by the way, was top-notch)—to the stories within. These weren't just coworkers; they were innovators, storytellers, and tireless advocates for the truth. Together, we worked to inform, inspire, and unite our readers. I often find myself marveling at the product we created every day, and I'm proud to say the least.

Over the years, I had the privilege of witnessing *Saipan Tribune*'s impact firsthand—how our work resonated with readers, sparked important conversations, supported businesses both big and small, raised awareness about critical issues, celebrated milestones, offered comfort and reassurance, provided essential news updates during challenging times, and honored the unique culture and history of our islands.

We were there during the COVID-19 pandemic, reporting the number of positive cases every day. We stood with the community during calamities, especially the two super typhoons that devastated our islands—Soudelor and Yutu—reporting from the front lines to bring you the stories of resilience and recovery. We were there for every election, every celebration, every issue, even tragedies, and every important event, ensuring that our readers stayed informed every step of the way.

Being part of something greater than yourself is a rare and beautiful experience, and

See GOODBYE on Page 27

Thank You

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

for being a part in our journey of providing exceptional care to the CNMI communities!

The Saipan Seventh-day Adventist Dental Clinic has been proudly serving the communities of Saipan, Tinian and Rota since 1972. Established with a mission to provide quality care, we have built a long history of offering trustworthy dental services while promoting both oral and overall health. Guided by Christian values and principles, we remain dedicated to meeting the needs of our patients and ensuring they receive the best possible care.
We are also committed to providing health education and outreach programs. Every year, free service is given to patients who do not have dental insurance.

For 2025, please find our upcoming dental outreach schedules below:

Give Kids a Smile (Saipan)	-	Feb. 16
Tinian Free Clinic	-	June 29
Clinic with a Heart (Saipan)	-	Aug. 31
Rota Free Clinic	-	Nov. 9-11

For more information, please call us at
670-234-6323 or
email us at **info@saipansdadental.com.**

Hafa adai! We are excited to announce the return of a relief dentist to the SDA Clinic team. **DR. JEFFREY SCHROEDER** will be with us starting December 31, 2024. Dr. Schroeder graduated from Loma Linda University School of Dentistry in 1991. Throughout his career, Dr. Schroeder has gained valuable experience in various aspects of general dentistry, including volunteering on mission trips where he worked with patients with special needs. He also did training in placing and restoring implants.

Outside of dentistry, Dr. Schroeder enjoys scuba diving and playing pickle ball. He and his wife Sheila, a relationship coaching specialist for individuals and couples, are blessed with two wonderful daughters who are a central part of their lives.

We are thrilled to have Dr. Schroeder with us as he continues the tradition of providing excellent dental care to the people we are privileged to serve in CNMI.

SAIPAN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CLINIC

Operating Hours:
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Friday • 9:00 am - 12:00 pm
Phone: (670) 234-6323 • Fax: (670) 234-0521
Email: info@saipansdadental.com

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

From all of us at Wushin Corporation, we extend our sincerest gratitude to the Saipan Tribune for the many years of invaluable service and partnership.

The Saipan Tribune has been more than just a newspaper—it has been a cornerstone of our community, amplifying voices, sharing stories, and connecting us all. Your dedication to excellence and your unwavering support for local businesses, including ours, have made a significant difference in shaping Saipan's landscape.

As you bring this remarkable chapter to a close, we reflect on the trust and collaboration we've built together over the years. It has been an honor to work with such a passionate and professional team.

Thank you for the memories, the opportunities, and the legacy you leave behind. We wish you every success in the future and know that your impact will not soon be forgotten.

From the management & staff of

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Fax: 322-7414
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GOODBYE

From page 26

I am endlessly grateful for the opportunity to contribute to *Saipan Tribune*'s incredible legacy.

As I say goodbye to this chapter, my heart is full of gratitude for the friendships, lessons, and memories I've gained along the way. To my *Saipan Tribune* family—thank you for your support, laughter, and brilliance. To our readers—thank you for trusting us with your stories and for allowing us to be a part of your lives. To our wonderful advertisers—thank you for being our partners through the years. We wouldn't have lasted this long without your support. We wish you continued success and hope you keep on thriving despite the economic challenges our island is currently facing. *Saipan Tribune* may be closing its doors, but its spirit will live on in all of us who had the privilege to call it a friend, a part of the family, and home.

—Nhorleen Bitco Lilles,* Saipan Tribune *sales supervisor

■■■

For over 30 years, *Saipan Tribune* has been a cornerstone of our community. At Saipan Humane Society, we are deeply grateful for *Saipan Tribune*'s role in shining a light on animal welfare issues and helping us share our mission of creating a safer, more compassionate island for all living beings.

Your coverage has not only educated and informed but has also inspired action and change. As *Saipan Tribune* closes its final chapter, we reflect with gratitude on the countless ways you've impacted the lives of both people and animals in the CNMI.

Thank you for your support and dedication to this community. Your legacy will live on in the hearts of those whose lives you have touched.

—Lauren Cabrera, Saipan Humane Society

■■■

To the *Saipan Tribune* team, on behalf of Green Meadow School, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to the *Saipan Tribune* as you bring an incredible 30 years of service to a close.

For three decades, the *Saipan Tribune* has been a vital part of our community, keeping us informed, connected, and engaged. Your dedication to sharing stories that matter has shaped the way we understand and celebrate life in the Northern Marianas.

We especially want to thank you for the support you've shown to Green Meadow School. Through your stories and coverage of our events, you've helped highlight the achievements of our students and staff, allowing us to share our journey with the wider community.

Your work has made a lasting impact on our society. The stories you've told and the values you've upheld will continue to inspire us all.

As *Saipan Tribune* closes, we wish every member of your team success in the future. Thank you for over 30 years of service, dedication, and excellence.

—Milagros M. Songcuan, Green Meadow School

■■■

Saipan Tribune has been an invaluable presence in the media and communications field within the CNMI for many years. I am deeply grateful for the coverage they have provided me, whether in my personal capacity, during my time as Miss Marianas, or in connection with my work at the Northern Marianas Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. While I find myself at a loss for words, I know that the impact of their work and the dedication of their wonderful team will truly be missed. Thank you to everyone who has been part of *Saipan Tribune*'s over 30-year journey. I wish the entire team the very best as they close this chapter and embark on new journeys ahead.

—Savannah Lynn Delos Santos, 2021 Miss Northern Marianas

■■■

Happy Holidays to the *Saipan Tribune* Team! We celebrate this holiday season with gratitude and reflection of all of the priceless historical moments in time that you have recorded. As community members, we honor your incredible 30 years journey. Your work has been a beacon of light connecting us together with important news, fostering dialogue, and preserving history that helps define our islands. It is with a heavy heart that we acknowledge this CNMI business closure that we valued so much. Yet, we remain confident that the talent, passion and dedication of your faithful employees will lead to an even greater technological future. Thank you for your three decades of exceptional service, and may this new year bring renewed prosperity with futuristic opportunities.

—Ray A. Cabrera Austin and family, Chalan Piao

■■■

We were deeply saddened to learn of your upcoming closure at the end of the year. We want to express our sincere gratitude for the professional, honest, and timely coverage you have provided to the Northern Mariana Islands community. Your commitment to delivering comprehensive news from all sectors has played an invaluable role in keeping us informed.

You will be greatly missed, and we wish each of you all the best in your future endeavors. May God bless the entire *Saipan Tribune* team.

—Pastor Pang and Mrs. Pang, Agape Christian School

■■■

As the *Saipan Tribune* enters the final chapter of its remarkable journey, the Saipan Magalahi Eagles Club and the Saipan Maga'Haga Lady Eagles Group of the Fraternal Order of Eagles (Philippine Eagle) would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for the unwavering support you have given us throughout the years.

Your generosity in publishing our press releases free of charge has allowed us to share our activities, community services, and projects with a wider audience. Through your platform, we were able to inspire and engage with the community, promoting the values and missions that our clubs stand for.

Beyond supporting our initiatives, the *Saipan Tribune* has stood as a pillar of integrity and dependable journalism in CNMI. Your commitment to providing timely news, updates and thought-provoking articles has greatly enriched our community.

While we are saddened to see your doors close, your legacy will live on. The contributions you made to this community will be remembered and cherished.

—Saipan Magalahi Eagles Club, Saipan Maga'Haga Lady Eagles Group

■■■

I grew up reading *Saipan Tribune*, and like the Hyatt Regency, I felt it was a part of the CNMI who always was contributing nothing but good to the community. Good or bad news, *Saipan Tribune* was there for us during the good and bad times.

On behalf of the Shinkyokushin family, please know that we appreciate everything you have done to help promote the dojo. We will be here also to help if need be.

We thank you for your never-ending support to us.

—Eric Atalig, Shinkyokushinkai Karate

■■■

I just wanted to take a moment to thank you for all the hard work you've put into serving our community. Your reporting over the years has kept us informed and connected, and it's clear that your work has made a real difference! I just wanted to let you know how much I appreciate everything you've done. Your stories will forever live on, we truly will miss you!

—Zowie Cruz, 2023 Miss Northern Marianas Earth

■■■

Thank you so much for your kind message and for the recognition I received on the *Saipan Tribune*. It truly means a lot to me to be acknowledged for my contributions to baseball and sports in our community. *Saipan Tribune* has been an integral part of our islands, sharing stories that inspire and connect us all. I am incredibly grateful for the platform it provided to highlight the achievements and passion of local athletes. As we reflect on the closure of the Tribune, I want to express my heartfelt appreciation for the impact it has had on my journey and the journeys of many others. Thank you once again for your support and for the opportunity to share my thoughts.

—Kiana "Baby K" Camacho, baseball player

■■■

Saipan Tribune's final publication at the end of this month is an end to an era of over three decades of reporting the CNMI's most significant events. The long list of journalists who became part of *Saipan Tribune* had a front-row seat in witnessing different historical events and shared the information with the people of the Commonwealth. The expected closure saddens me, but I will forever cherish all the memories I experienced with my coworkers, who became part of my extended family. From the daily office banter that included the Harold and Kumar-like comedic duo of Mark Rabago and me, the buffet lunches and dinners, and the never-ending deadlines to finish four stories, and the sound of Jayvee Vallejera's voice saying: "Nasaan na ang mga istorya niyo? Bilisan niyo!" (Where are your stories? Write faster!). I am glad I spent six years (2007 to 2008 and 2014 to 2019) with *Saipan Tribune*. Now, *Saipan Tribune*'s watch has ended.

— Jonathan Perez, former* Saipan Tribune *reporter

■■■

Saipan Tribune was my first professional journalism job after graduating from college. I moved halfway across the world to join the team. I'm grateful for the wonderful people I met who welcomed me with open arms.

I'm also thankful for the on-the-job training I received while at the newspaper. It's where I learned to ask tough questions, seek out Freedom of Information records, and not be afraid to hold the powerful to account.

I want to thank everyone who helped me along the way. I'm so sad to hear about the shuttering but am hopeful for the future of news in the CNMI.

— Kristi Eaton, former* Saipan Tribune *reporter

■■■

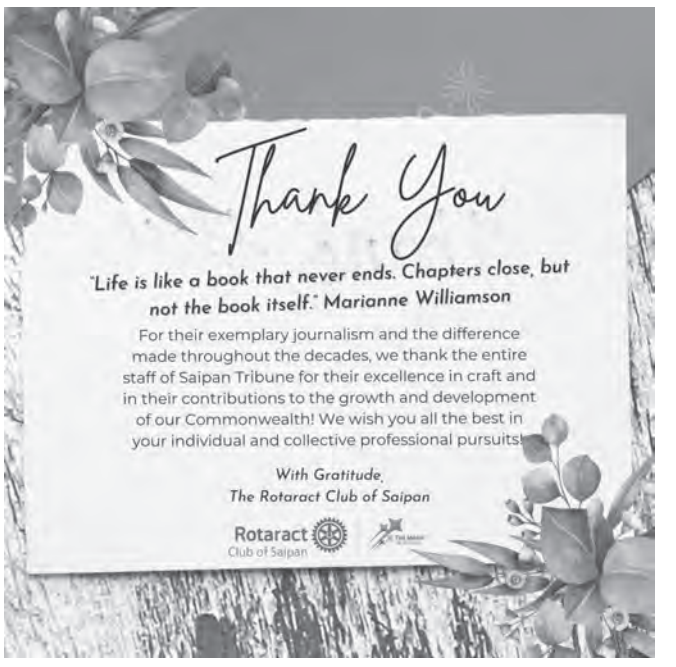
First, I want to share that it's quite difficult to collect my chain of thought to begin to write this note on your closure and permanent departure from our islands' daily conversations across all topics emanating from the daily events and information gathered from board rooms, to legislative halls, public and private events across the villages, across the archipelago, and abroad into the newsroom from reporters to editor and out to the public's consumption. I could not imagine!

Truly a sad moment to fathom that this day would come for a decision to permanently switch off the printing press. But given the dynamic economic condition in this small islands' community here in CNMI, and the open source and open access to social media platforms through the worldwide web superhighway, it is a challenge for print media to survive in this climate. And I could only imagine the difficult decision from a corporate perspective considering the many lives that will be impacted, from employees to vendors to community members, difficult indeed!

But I want to share great memories despite some of the challenging ones, I can remember the early reporting days of Jayvee Valeria from community events to legislative agenda on some of the most controversial proposed legislations to public policies, who climbed that media totem pole as *Saipan Tribune*'s reporter to editor-in-chief for many years. Editor Jayvee has always showed respect no matter the difficulty of the conversation at hand while in government offices or at the supermarket or the village mom-and-pop stores. I have so much respect for you, Sir. Thank you for indulging your time and patience as we navigate the things that mattered most for our community.

I would be remised not to mention the professional reporting work of one of *Saipan Tribune*'s great assets, senior reporter Ferdie Dela Torre. Although we are always crossing each other in many venues from the legislative session chambers, board meetings, community events, court rooms, and debate forums. I

See GOODBYE on Page 29


Thank You
"Life is like a book that never ends. Chapters close, but not the book itself." Marianne Williamson
For their exemplary journalism and the difference made throughout the decades, we thank the entire staff of Saipan Tribune for their excellence in craft and in their contributions to the growth and development of our Commonwealth! We wish you all the best in your individual and collective professional pursuits!
With Gratitude,
The Rotaract Club of Saipan
Rotaract
Club of Saipan

Farewell
SUPPLEMENT
STAFF BOX

MARK RABAGO
EDITOR

TERI FLORES
NHORLEEN BITCO LILLES
RACQUEL FLOYD
WRITERS

NHORLEEN BITCO LILLES
SALES SUPERVISOR

CHRISTINE SOFIA HAYAG
CUSTOMER REPRESENTATIVE

JOSE ROBERTO AGUILAR
ART SUPERVISOR

ROSS GARCIA
EDMUNDO ROBLES
LAYOUT ARTIST

Happy New Year!

As we welcome 2025, we reflect on the strength and resilience of our community. Your unwavering support and shared commitment to uplifting lives inspire us to continue our mission of making a meaningful difference.

This new year brings new opportunities to work together toward a brighter, more sustainable future. Let us move forward with hope, compassion, and a renewed dedication to building a stronger CNMI.

From all of us at the Tan Siu Lin Foundation, we wish you and your loved ones a year filled with joy, good health, and prosperity. Together, let's make 2025 a year of progress and positive change for our community!

Cheers to a hopeful and inspiring 2025!

From the management and staff of

Tan Holdings

HEALTH IS WEALTH

Tan Siu Lin Foundation

GOODBYE

From page 27

always appreciate his work throughout the years. Thank you, Ferdie!

The short but impactful chats I experienced with *Saipan Tribune*'s super-charge correspondent Racquel H. Floyd, for her frankness and engaging conversations on some of the most difficult topics around the community from cultural center to water quality. Thank you, Racquel, for the good times together!

I must give a special recognition to community Nhorleen Bitco-Lilles for her untiring and relentless commitment to ensure your voice is included in the conversation and process—rule No. 1 as professional journalist on taking not just both sides of the story; but all sides of the story. I truly appreciate your patience, persistence, and commitment to your work.

At the top of this totem pole taking on the lead is editor Mark Rabago whom I have very limited interaction and communication, but his work had the greatest impact on the issues that are critical to the Chamorro identity, which is the core of my advocacy and activism on challenging and controversial indigenous issues that brought national and international attention. The significance and importance of his work, as both writer and editor, set the standard of moral and ethical reporting, unbiased and balanced information on public policy in the CNMI. I am truly grateful Mark, thank you!

Finally, thank you to the unsung heroes, in the front of the house and back of the house, that has made the news media machine in operation for over three decades to ensure that the newspaper both print and online are ready bright and early for the readers and bloggers (lol). Your contribution is not unnoticed, thank you!

Last but not least, un dankulu na si yu'us ma'asi—thank you to the corporate and management of *Saipan Tribune* for providing the media platform for over three decades to ensure community access to information on issues that are important to our small islands' population here in the CNMI and connecting those living abroad. We appreciate your contributions as CNMI's first daily newspaper and the only newspaper with a weekend edition for many years. *Saipan Tribune* is a thread in the making of the CNMI's fabric. Hats off to you all!

—Liana Sablan-Hofschneider, activist for Indigenous rights

■■■

Thank you to *Saipan Tribune* for the invaluable opportunities and support you provided me while I was working here. Though we will no longer see the everyday newspaper in town, I truly appreciate the guidance and mentorship that helped me develop my skills and grow professionally. I will always cherish the experiences I gained from the team.

—Ladyvir Santos Dela Cruz Canepe, former Saipan Tribune accounting manager

■■■

On behalf of the board of directors, management, and staff of the Mariana Islands Nature Alliance, we extend our deep gratitude for the service that *Saipan Tribune* has provided to our community for more than thirty years, and specifically to our organization since its founding in 2005.

Saipan Tribune sales and marketing teams have responded to our requests in a timely and professional manner, and the news reporters and editorial staff have shown exemplary dedication to providing fair and accurate reporting on events throughout the CNMI.

In particular, MINA is extremely grateful for *Saipan Tribune*'s coverage of the many community and volunteer events throughout the years that have been hosted by MINA in fulfilling our mission of empowering environmental stewardship through science and island wisdom with our programs such as Adopt a Bin, Schools for Environmental Conservation, the Tasi Watch Rangers, Community Recycles Plastics, and Marine Debris Prevention.

You will surely be missed, and while we are saddened by the closure of *Saipan Tribune* at the end of this year, we wish your entire team a bright future ahead in 2025.

—Roberta Guerrero, MINA executive director

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The closing of *Saipan Tribune* isn't just the end of a newspaper—it's the closing of a cherished chapter in our community's living history. To all the incredible journalists, dedicated staff, and management who have been our storytellers for decades: *Si yu'us ma'ase* and thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Saipan Tribune has been more than just a newspaper. It's been like that warm, familiar friend who's always been there —the neighbor who knows your name, the grocer who greets you with a smile, the confidant who listens when you need to share. We didn't always realized how much we relied on them, until now.

As a member of this beautiful community, I'm reminded that change, though painful, often carries the seeds of new beginnings. Our strength has always been in our resilience—learned from our beloved man'amko who have taught us the profound value of inafa'maolek, our sacred commitment to caring for one another. Even as our economy faces challenges, the spirit of our *taotao tano'*—our people—remains unbroken.

This isn't an ending. This is a transition. We will continue to tell our stories, to stay connected, to support one another.

We will move forward together. We will find new ways to share our experiences, to stay united, to keep our community's heartbeat strong. Biba Marianas! Biba the spirit of *Saipan Tribune*! Until we meet again, dear friend.

—Joann T. Aquino, Rotary Club of Saipan president

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I would also like to take this opportunity to extend a heartfelt appreciation to all of the advertisers who have supported us throughout the years, it was your continued commitment to advertising with *Saipan Tribune* that allowed

See GOODBYE on Page 30

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

Main Office: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
P.O. BOX 501055 • SAIPAN • MP 96950-1055
Phone: (670) 237-6500 • Fax: (670) 234-5962
E-Mail Address: cpa.admin@pticom.com • Website: www.cnmiports.com

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT # 01-2025

Opening date: December 16, 2024 **Closing date: January 03, 2025**

Location:	**SAIPAN**	**SALARY**
Position(s):	(1) AOA Controller-I	PL 5/1 ($8.83/hr. or $18,362.70/annum)
	(1) General Maintenance-I	PL 3/1 ($8.01/hr. or $16,655.51/annum)
Location:	**TINIAN**	**SALARY**
Position(s):	(1) AOA Controller/Ground Maintenance-I	PL 5/1 ($8.83/hr. or $18,362.70/annum)
	(1) General Maintenance-II	PL 5/1 ($8.83/hr. or $18,362.70/annum)
	(1) Tariff Technician-I	PL 4/1 ($8.41/hr. or $17,488.29/annum)
Location:	**ROTA**	**SALARY**
Position(s):	(1) Ports Police/ARFF Trainee	PL 5/1 ($8.83/hr.)
	(1) General Maintenance-II	PL 5/1 ($8.83/hr. or $18,362.70/annum)

Employment Application must be accompanied with a copy of all required diploma/certificates and/or official sealed transcripts, original copy of recent police record not more than six (6) months old, original copy of U.S. Department of Defense Form DD214 for retired members or veterans of our Armed Forces, and other documents as required for the position. Public Law 11-70 requires that all male applicants age 18 to 25 years old must submit documentation evidencing his registration with the Federal Selective Service System. All applications and required documents must be submitted to the ***CPA Administration Office, 2nd Floor Arrival Building, Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport or CPA Administration Office, Tinian International Airport, or Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport.*** Failure to provide any of the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. Certain vacancies may require written and/or physical test. Selected applicants will be subjected to pre-employment drug screening, 10-year Criminal History Record Check and 49 CFR Part 1542.209(d) Requirements. CPA reserves the right to waive or implement other qualifications to meet its needs. The deadline for submission of applications and required documents to the CPA Administration Office (Saipan) or at the Tinian International Airport or Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport is no later than **5:00 P.M. on Friday, January 03, 2025.**

Detailed information on qualifications and position descriptions for the above positions may be picked up along with the application form from Monday-Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., except on holidays and austerity, at the CPA Administration Office (2nd Floor) of the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, Arrival Terminal or CPA Admin, Office at the Tinian International Airport or at the Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport. For additional information, please contact the CPA Human Resources Office by email at lorna.robert@cnmiports.com and hrspecialist@cnmiports.com or by phone at (670)237-6500.

CPA is an Equal Opportunity Employer and CPA hires those who are legally entitled to employment in the CNMI.

FREDERICK A. PANGELINAN
Acting Executive Director

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

Office of the Executive Director

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
CUC-RFP-25-010
FINANCIAL AND COMPLIANCE AUDIT FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2025, 2026 & 2027

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) requires the services of a U.S. Certified Public Accounting Firm/Individual with knowledge, skill, and experience in auditing (1) financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and auditing standards of the U.S. and; (2) federal awards programs in accordance with the Single Audit Act and U.S. Office of Management and Budget requisites

- Provide assistance to the CUC management with the preparation of the annual financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America
- Ensure that the financial statements and auditor's reports also meet any specific requirements contained in agreements or other contractual requirements relative to financial statement presentation and the audits.
- Submit the draft financial statements and accompanying auditor's reports to CUC management no later than January 31st of each year, and issue the final reports no later than February 28th of each year.
- Provide 15 bound copies of the final financial statements and accompanying auditor's report
- Provide an electronic copy (e.g., .pdf format) of the final report to the CUC.

Auditors are responsible to review the 2025, 2026 & 2027 financial statements to include the physical CUC assets for each fiscal year.

The RFP package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $100.00 for one RFP package set.

One (1) original and five (5) hard copies, along with an electronic copy of the proposal on a compact disk in PDF format must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked ***"CUC-RFP-25-010, Financial and Compliance Audit for Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2025, 2026 & 2027"*** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **January 10, 2025 at 10:00 AM** (ChST). Submissions, in PDF, must also be emailed to the addresses as noted in the RFP. Late submissions and conditional proposals will not be considered.

Discussions may be conducted with responsible offerors who submit proposals determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. Offerors shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity to discussion and revision of proposals, and such revision may be permitted after submission and prior to award for the purpose of obtaining the best and final offers. During discussions, there will be no disclosure of any information derived from proposals submitted by competing offerors.

All Offeror are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the Offeror due to lack of information or understanding of the proposal requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a proposal or supply under the contract. The RFP does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the proposal under this request, or to procure or contract for services. Offeror are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective proposers and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 20, 2024** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Betty G. Terlaje, CUC Chief Financial Officer, via email address betty.terlaje@cucgov.org,, Rodolfo Urbano, CUC Chief Accountant via email, rodolfo.urbano@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio, via email address, marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals for any reason and to waive any defects in said proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All proposals shall become the property of CUC.

KEVIN O. WATSON
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

GOODBYE

From page 29

us to stay connected with our community and continue delivering valuable content.

Thank you for believing in us, for your loyalty, and for being a vital part of our journey. Your support will always be remembered and deeply appreciated.

—Beth Del Rosario, former Saipan Tribune advertising manager

■■■

The first time that I stepped foot on the lands of the Northern Mariana Islands, I walked into Fresh Market and saw a copy of *Saipan Tribune*. The layout, the delivery of information, and overall comfort allowed me and perpetuated me to choose *Saipan Tribune* as my No. 1 source of information. However, it didn't stop there. I would see individuals from *Saipan Tribune* not only covering the news, but being instrumental in creating and actively taking part in events.

Saipan Tribune is your neighbor. A friend that you can talk to about anything.

It is very sad to see such an instrumental facet of the community to close their doors and leave. This reflects not the Tribune but the continued presence of CNMI leadership that has not embraced change, growth, vision toward economic stability and autonomous sustainability for the future.

My hopes are that maybe you continue with a weekend addition to allow the continued relationship to the people that love you and your service. Thus, thank you from the bottom of my heart for your diligence and service to the citizens of the CNMI and Micronesia.

—Dr. Tai D. Doram, PSS Behavioral specialist

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For over 30 years, *Saipan Tribune* has been a beacon of truth, a champion of local voices, and will always be part of the islands' history. Its journalists, editors, and staff's dedication, passion, and expertise have earned a special place in our hearts.

As we bid farewell to this beloved institution, we are grateful for their support, especially to our non-profit organizations, every time we ask for assistance with our press releases, the employees don't hesitate to extend help to all of us.

We sincerely thank the entire *Saipan Tribune* family for their unwavering commitment to journalism and public service.

May the memories, stories, and lessons from *Saipan Tribune*'s archives will continue to enrich our lives and inspire future generations.

—Annamae G. Adaza, UFO

■■■

Saipan Tribune did its best to uphold the standards of journalism and deliver news about the Marianas every day. Its closure is the breaking news story we never wanted to see published. *Saipan Tribune* was my second job in journalism and I learned so much from the journalists there as a correspondent in high school. I fondly look back at my experience and value the time I spent with the staff who built the paper.

—Thomas Manglona II, Marianas Press

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One of the things that kept me reading *Saipan Tribune*, besides the desire to keep up with CNMI news, was my enjoyment reading John S. Del Rosario's Chamorro column. In an age where it is very difficult to find anything written in Chamorro, especially anything current and recurring, John's Chamorro op eds were like drops of water in a sandy desert.

Not only did John give us his opinions on political, economic and social issues of the CNMI, he also gave us a window into the Chamorro language and psychology. He framed issues from the perspective of a Chamorro man who grew up in Saipan in the decades following the war, from the times when the island endured many disadvantages, right through the plentiful years of prosperity and into the challenging times of economic downturns and political commotion.

He reminded us that the politicos that he called out were not in Capitol Hill but rather at I Denne', the Chamorro name for the place. He likened the plight of people to that of a naufrago, or shipwreck survivor. He used names and words that could easily slip into oblivion as newer generations lose contact with older terms. John's articles document them, and language learners and researchers can access them in years to come.

John brought us back to our roots, when people who had little money could still grow, hunt and fish for their food, and enjoy the dignity of living from their hard work. He reminded us that our elders valued faith, family and communal cooperation, all counter points to the cut throat individualism and financial ambitions of the modern age.

In almost every column, I'd have to read and reread a line or two just to finally get an idea what John was trying to say. His words were the outer wrapping paper of Chamorro ideas of his generation. It took some effort for someone like me, from a different place and generation, to see the light. But this is how we learn and expand our perspectives. On numerous occasions I'd have to run to a Chamorro dictionary, and sometimes even a Spanish one, to understand a word John used.

I will miss these hard lessons that brought much reward. I am losing yet another teacher of Chamorro speaking and thinking. But we have many years of John's writings and I hope they can be preserved and archived in a way that we can access. Otherwise, I feel as if I'd be the next naufrago.

—Pale' Eric Forbes, Capuchin superior, Saint Fidelis Friary, Guam

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The American Red Cross of the Northern Mariana Islands extends heartfelt thanks to *Saipan Tribune* for its steadfast support over the years. Your unwavering commitment over the past 30 years has been instrumental in providing us with the necessary resources and tools to deliver critically

See GOODBYE on Page 31

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-25-009

SEWER MAIN AND MANHOLE REPLACEMENT/REHAB/UPGRADE PHASE II

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the construction of the Sewer Main and Manhole Replacement/Rehab/Upgrade Phase II in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists of realignment and replacement of the existing 4-inch bypass sewer line in **Capitol Hill Village** along **Capitol Hill Road** with a new 8-inch PVC distribution main. The scope includes the installation of appurtenances, fittings, new manholes with accessories, and the rehabilitation and reconnection of existing manholes, including the replacement of their accessories. All work must be performed in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications, ensuring no disruption to the daily operation of the sewer system. The Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) requires the project to be completed within three hundred sixty-five (365) calendar days from the date of contract award.

The project is funded by a grant from the United States of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by site visits will be held on **December 23, 2024, at 10:00 AM(CHST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies of the bid MUST be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "**CUC-IFB-25-009, SEWER MAIN AND MANHOLE REPLACEMENT/REHAB/UPGRADE PHASE II**" to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) January 16, 2025**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before due date and time.

Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

A *Bid Guarantee* of not less than fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidder. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands or otherwise secured in a manner satisfactory to CUC, for the protection of all persons supplying labor and material to the contractor or its subcontractors for the performance of the work provided for in the contract.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 a.m. (CHST) on December 30, 2024** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Officer via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Joel Puyat, CUC Water/Wastewater Engineer at email joel.puyat@cucgov.org, and to Marcela Tenorio, P&S, Senior Administrative Technician at marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

KEVIN O. WATSON
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Veterans Affairs
Pacific Islands Health Care System

Veterans
PACT Act Registration
Community Call Saipan

January 8, 2025 12pm - 4pm
January 9, 2025 8am - 4pm
January 10, 2025 8am - 4pm

Multi-Purpose / Civic Center
Beach Road, Susupe, Saipan 96950

★ Services Available ★

- PACT Act Registration
- Beneficiaary Travel Reimbursement
- Blood Pressure Checks
- Diabetic Foot Checks
- Health Screenings & Vaccines
- VA Benefits Assistance

For more information call 1-800-214-1306

GOODBYE

From page 30

needed services to our community. We are truly grateful for your continued partnership in making a lasting impact on the lives of those in need.

—Juan Diego V. Tenorio, disaster program Manager, American Red Cross-NMI Chapter

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I regularly read *Saipan Tribune*'s online edition and have found their articles and news coverage to be an important and reliable source for learning about local issues and services, government actions, cultural events, and for evaluating opportunities and threats in our community. In a 2022 study commissioned by the Northern Marianas Humanities Council, 66% of CNMI residents surveyed reported using *Saipan Tribune* often or all the time as a local news source. The same study revealed that 72% of CNMI residents surveyed perceived *Saipan Tribune* to be trustworthy or very trustworthy. As compared to other local news sources, the study suggests that at the tail-end of the Coronavirus Pandemic, *Saipan Tribune* led the pack in terms of the most frequently used and trusted local news source in our community.

Reliable and trustworthy local newspapers are important sources for documenting local history, community achievements, diverse voices, and stories for future generations. They help shape and reflect our community identity and values. They help readers make informed decisions about how to engage and participate in our government and cultural way of life. They are critical and necessary components of our democracy, holding our institutions and leaders accountable for decisions and actions that affect us all.

It is with a heavy heart and some anxiety that I bid farewell to *Saipan Tribune*. Your presence on my reading dashboard and daily morning routine will be greatly missed. Un dangkulu' na si yu'us ma'åsi' and ghilisow to those who have toiled behind the scenes to bring us the best in news reporting and stories from *Saipan Tribune*.

—Leo Pangelinan, Director, Northern Marianas Humanities Council

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As *Saipan Tribune* celebrates over 30 years of dedicated service to the people of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, we want to express our deepest gratitude for the vital role you've played in our community. For more than three decades, you have been an unwavering source of news, information, and connection for our residents, providing invaluable coverage of local events, challenges, and triumphs.

We are deeply saddened to see *Saipan Tribune* close its doors, as it has been an essential voice and a trusted resource for the people of the CNMI. Your commitment to journalism, integrity, and the public good has helped inform, engage, and unite our community. The loss of this vital source of information will be felt by many who relied on you for news, perspective, and local coverage.

As you close this chapter, we extend our heartfelt thanks for your tireless efforts over the years. Your contributions to the CNMI will not be forgotten, and we will always appreciate the important role you've played in shaping our community.

On behalf of the Rota leadership and the people of Rota, we offer our congratulations on your remarkable legacy. We extend our best wishes and pray for continued success in the endeavors of the management and staff of the *Saipan Tribune* team as they embark on their next journey in life.

—Aubry Manglona Hocog, Rota mayor

■■■

On behalf of the Commonwealth Cancer Association, we extend our heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to *Saipan Tribune* for the incredible legacy you have built and the profound impact you've had on our community and the region.

For years, you have been a trusted source of information, a powerful voice for awareness, and a vital platform for sharing important messages with the public. Your dedication to spreading cancer prevention information, raising awareness about health issues, and sharing stories that matter has been instrumental in empowering and educating our community.

Your partnership with CCA has been a cornerstone in our efforts to reach families across the Commonwealth. Whether it was through your thoughtful coverage of cancer-related events, informative articles, or unwavering support for our mission, you have been a valued ally in the fight against cancer. Your commitment to ensuring that vital health messages reached those who needed them most has undoubtedly saved lives and inspired hope.

As *Saipan Tribune* prepares for its final publication on Dec. 31, we reflect with gratitude on your incredible contributions. Though the end of this chapter marks a significant loss for our community, your legacy of service, dedication, and journalistic excellence will never be forgotten.

Thank you, *Saipan Tribune*, for being a beacon of information, awareness, and inspiration. Your work has made a difference, and your impact will continue to resonate far beyond the printed pages.

With deepest gratitude and best wishes for the future,

— Mercilia "Iya" Teigita, Commonwealth Cancer Association

■■■

For over 30 years, *Saipan Tribune* has been my primary source of daily news. Their in-depth coverage of events in and around Mariana Islands and other countries, delivering newsworthy stories to their reader, and keep me updated on what is happening in the community and other places as well. As longtime employee of Herman's Modern Bakery, I am especially grateful for the way *Saipan Tribune* shared my story to the community. I am deeply saddened that the newspaper is closing. Thank you, *Saipan Tribune* for all that you do, for the community.

—Eernie N. Lineses, former production upervisor, Herman's Modern Bakery.

■■■

To look back over the years, particularly as an athlete, I was always excited to view the front page of the back page which is the latest sporting news from *Saipan Tribune*. For example, during my high school rotary basketball league and college, 22-and-under days, my friends and I would gather in our campus hangouts after to look at the latest newspaper and discuss who got covered and whose photo was posted on the cover.

I felt that the daily sports coverage from all competition levels brought people together and excitement that contributes to sharing smiles, laughter, and tears when discussing with friends and family near or far.

Saipan Tribune sports coverage is a big deal in the CNMI; since we are a mix ethnicity sharing a moment of intense competition that linger for days and weeks, when athletes show determination, it removes the barriers of status and brings us all closer together.

What's exciting about it is seeing the sports reporters such Mr. Mark Rabago, Ms. Roselyn Monroyo, and most recently Ms. Leigh Gases during the games and competition. It helps us athletes know that we are being recognized when we excel during the competition. When athletes get lucky after competitions, previously Mr. Mark, Ms. Monroyo, or Ms. Leigh will capture an interview of how we felt about the result of the competition.

Saipan Tribune has contributed to finding the next big thing from Kelvin Fitial, Frank "The Crank," Jericho Cruz to Tania Tan. The youth nowadays specially with the easy access to online news update look up to these athletes and seek to be the up-and-coming star athlete that will represent the CNMI locally, regionally, and internationally.

—Jerry Diaz, Public School System

■■■

It is very sad for me to see one of Saipan's premiere news sources closing its doors. My fondest memories of the *Saipan Tribune* will always be the hardworking journalist and staff that were dedicated to the freedom of press. Thank you to the hardworking and exceptional employees of the *Saipan Tribune* for your dedication and commitment to our community. You have always shared everyone's stories with passion and love and I will miss you all every much for your service.

—Edward S. Dela Cruz Jr, Run Saipan president, Northern Marianas Professional Fire Fighters Union-Local 5335 vice president

■■■

The closure of *Saipan Tribune* is deeply sad. Personally, I moved to Tinian in 2003, and I used the *Saipan Tribune* as a tool for learning English. When I first arrived, I couldn't speak any English. I was working at a hotel at the time, and they always buy *Saipan Tribune*. Because of this, *Saipan Tribune*'s history is also a part of my own journey in learning English. I'm feeling very emotional right now, and I am truly grateful to the *Saipan Tribune* for always providing valuable information that helped the community

—Miho Evangelista, Saipan Cares for Animals

■■■

As we welcome the New Year, the Aquatic Education Program along with the entire Division of Fish and Wildlife sends heartfelt greetings to our community for a prosperous and joyful 2025! This moment serves as an opportunity for reflection, personal growth, and a renewed commitment to protecting our natural resources while teaching future generations about the importance of sustainability.

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to *Saipan Tribune.* Your dedication and many years of service to the CNMI have been invaluable. Your commitment to informing and engaging our community has made a significant impact on our lives. As you close your business, we wish you all the best in your future endeavors. Olomwaay, si yu'us ma'ase and thank you for being a vital part of our community's journey!

May this New Year bring hope, health, and happiness to everyone. God bless!

—Dena N. Kamano, Aquatic Education Program, Division of Fish and Wildlife

END

From page 17

facing print media. The rapid growth of social media and the proliferation of online news sources created a new, highly competitive media ecosystem, making it increasingly difficult for small regional newspapers to maintain their audience and revenue streams.

Even with its best efforts and adaptability, ultimately it is the same technological advances that the Tribune embraced which became fundamental to its closure. Management candidly acknowledged the shifting media landscape, noting that "increased availability of internet access and mobile devices has led consumers to demand instant information."

Digital transformation, declining advertising revenues, and changing media consumption habits have systematically dismantled traditional newspaper business models. On top of this, management said unforeseen calamities and ongoing local economic challenges made sustaining the business increasingly difficult. The Tribune, despite its deep roots in the community, could not escape these broader economic pressures.

Mark Rabago, *Tribune*'s managing editor, said the last eight months have been particularly difficult to run the newsroom. "With only two reporters on staff—one assigned to general news coverage (Kimberly B. Esmores) while one to sports (Liegh Gases)—with no days off, it's a general feeling of trying to run the newspaper on fumes. Thank goodness for correspondents Ferdie Dela Torre (former senior reporter) Chrystal Marino, Racquel H. Floyd, Jercy Maximo, and Skylee Santos for filling the gap."

The human cost

Behind the *Tribune*'s closure are real human stories of its journalists, artists, sales and administrative workers who suddenly found themselves without the career that had defined their professional lives.

During its peak, the *Tribune* employed over 30 full-time staff, and its closure represents a significant economic and professional disruption.

Angel "Jonjie" Reyes, a 23-year veteran who at one point served as Art Director from 2008 until his departure in 2016, recalled that the newspaper's impending challenges were already evident long before its closure.

"In a way, I had hoped the Tribune would continue to be printed. But it was unable to adapt to the advancements in technology and the rapid rise of social media. It's sad because the newspaper recorded 32 years of CNMI history," said Reyes.

As the newspaper prepares to print its final copies, the management's closing words resonate with appreciation for the men and women who became a part of the *Saipan Tribune* family as well as to its community partners

"We are deeply grateful and proud of all members of the *Saipan Tribune* family—editors, writers, photographers, graphic artists, delivery personnel, finance department, sales, and advertising team members. "Their dedication and commitment have allowed the *Saipan Tribune* to advocate for press freedom and champion journalistic excellence in our region. We would also like to express our sincerest gratitude to all our readers, advertisers, and community partners for their valuable support and trust."

A proud legacy

Historians, researchers, and anyone seeking to understand the Northern Mariana Islands' recent history will find an invaluable resource in the publication's three decades of reporting. Despite the *Saipan Tribune*'s print edition closing, readers can continue to access the newspaper's comprehensive news coverage through its website, www.saipantribune.com. The earlier editions of the magazine *TAGA* Sports can be accessed on www.issuu.com (Search "TAGA Sports"), while the later editions (from 2017 onwards) are on tagaplus.saipantribune.com.

And while the physical newspaper may cease to exist, the *Saipan Tribune*'s enduring legacy will be preserved through digital archives that chronicle the community's history and journalistic record.

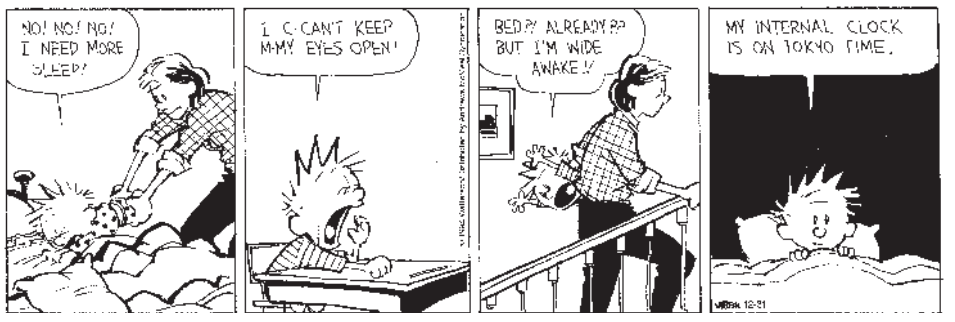
There is a palpable sense of both loss and gratitude as the *Saipan Tribune* prepares its final edition. But the voices it amplified, and the history it recorded will continue to resonate through the Northern Mariana Islands and beyond.

■ *In memory of a newspaper that was more than just ink on paper—a true chronicle of island life.*

Pastimes

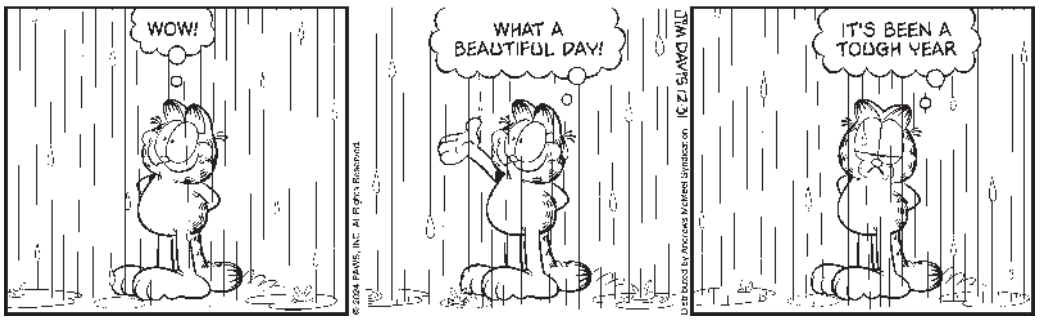
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



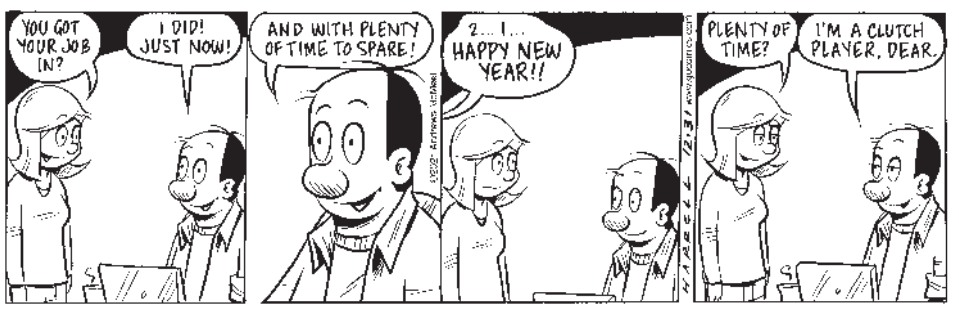
Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE STAYING UP TO WATCH THEM RING IN THE NEW YEAR IN TIMES SQUARE!
THIS IS THE YEAR WE BREAK OUT OF OUR RUT AND START LIVING LIFE IN THE MOMENT!
Here We Go! Five!.. FOUR!.. THREE!.. TWO!..
HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 One-named supermodel
5 Sub shop
9 Sit-up targets
12 Crèche trio
13 Ms. Brockovich
14 Chou En- —
15 Settings for dishes
17 Rapper — Kim
18 Mr. Kringle
19 Immune system agent
21 Bagel features
24 Cabinet dept. head
25 Gas co., for one
26 Unusual
30 Tyler of "Ad Astra"
31 Golf clubs
32 Carte lead-in
33 Log-on need
35 Harrow rival
36 Furnace fuel
37 Edition
38 Some Pacific salmon
40 Big D.C. employer
42 Actress Gasteyer
43 New Year's Eve headwear
48 J.D. holder
49 Buckeye State
50 Way out
51 Refusals
52 Fork prong
53 "Ratatouille" rat

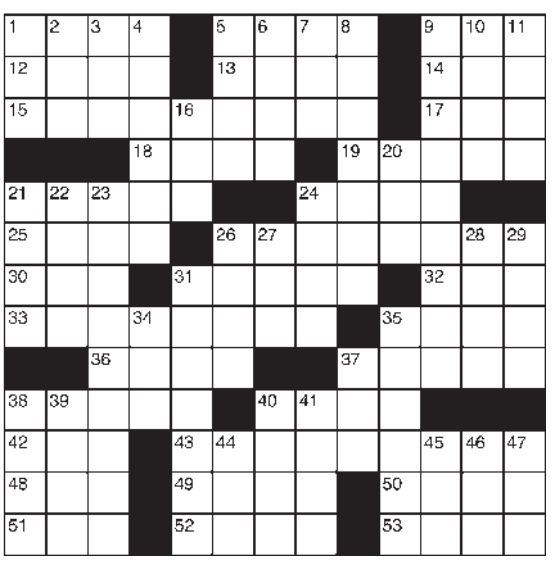
DOWN

1 Little rascal
2 — de mer
3 Khan title
4 Buffalo coin
5 Singer Lovato
6 "Taylor Swift: The — Tour" (2023 concert film)
7 Set afire
8 Shoe parts
9 Some city felines
10 Release money
11 Ledge
16 Hosp. areas
20 201, in old Rome
21 Video-streaming site
22 Elevator name
23 Real-time customer service options
24 "Auld Lang —"
26 Asia's — Sea
27 Male turkey
28 Baseball's Moises
29 Bowling place
31 Needing help
34 Kanga's kid
35 Old Testament book
37 Wall climber
38 "Misery" star James
39 Aware of
40 Big smile
41 Oklahoma tribe
44 Sashimi fish
45 Chopper
46 Dickens boy
47 Pigs' digs

Solution time: 22 mins.

H	O	H	O	■	S	P	A	■	B	E	L	A	
M	U	E	N	S	I	E	R	■	E	X	E	C	
M	I	N	I	M	A	R	T	■	S	P	A	T	
■	■	■	O	U	T	■	T	S	T	O	P	S	
P	A	I	N	T	■	K	I	L	O	■	■	■	
S	I	B	S	■	A	L	L	O	W	E	D	■	
A	R	E	■	G	R	U	M	P	■	K	I	R	
■	S	T	K	I	T	T	S	■	E	E	R	O	
■	■	■	E	L	I	E	■	B	I	D	E	D	
T	I	C	T	A	C	■	O	I	L	■	■	■	
R	O	M	O	■	L	A	T	T	E	A	R	T	
A	T	O	N	■	E	S	T	E	E	M	E	D	
M	A	N	E	■	S	A	O	■	N	O	D	S	

Yesterday's answer 12-31



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Joey McIntyre, 52; Val Kilmer, 65; Bebe Neuwirth, 66; Anthony Hopkins, 87.

Happy Birthday: It's okay to do things your way. It will make your life easier and encourage you to trust and believe in yourself. Stretch your imagination and take an innovative approach to your lifestyle and how you utilize your attributes, skills and knowledge to get ahead. Life is about choices; letting outside influences dictate your actions will not lead to happiness. Follow your heart, and do whatever it takes to eliminate stress. Your numbers are 4, 11, 17, 24, 32, 38, 47.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* End the year on a high note. Leave nothing unfinished that might jeopardize your position or your chance to advance. Taking care of business will eliminate trepidation, turning your New Year's celebration into a joyful event. Embrace and love who you are, and you'll make an impression on those you encounter. ✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Put your energy into tidying up loose ends. Preparation is everything; ending one year and beginning another on a high note will give you a reason to celebrate. Go over important papers and be sure to take care of time-sensitive transactions. Celebrate, but choose venues that don't pose health risks. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Maintain continuity as 2024 morphs into 2025. Be an attentive observer and learn all you can by noting how those you respect operate amongst their peers. How you treat others will determine what you get in return and help you enter the next phase of your life by making better choices. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* The world is yours to discover. Refrain from letting opportunities slip away or declining to participate in something due to laziness or fear. Do your research and take a leadership position as you wow everyone with future ideas and plans. Someone special will be watching. Be receptive to new beginnings. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Resolve to make self-improvements that reflect a positive attitude toward life, love and happiness. Start by setting boundaries to avoid participating in things you should forgo and people who are a poor influence. Focus on personal victory and engaging with what and who matters most to you. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Accept an invitation, get out there and participate in events that offer insight into new possibilities. What makes you happy will impact your priorities throughout 2025. Look at the folks you admire and respect and incorporate a version of what they do into your routine to achieve self-satisfaction. Choose discipline, not indulgence. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Pressure yourself to be, do and look your best. Don't hesitate to venture out and participate in social events that offer access to those you look up to or learn from. An interesting connection has the potential to turn into a partnership. Keep your valuables in a safe place. ✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Listen to health warnings and plan accordingly. Don't put yourself or your loved ones at risk. There are plenty of ways to ring in the new year without jeopardizing what you've built or heading into 2025 carrying baggage or debt, or by tempting fate. Wise choices will give you the boost to excel. ✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Refrain from letting anyone tempt, belittle or pressure you. Think matters through to the end before you commit to something that could have you feeling uncomfortable. Make a vow to take better care of yourself and focus on establishing stability and security as you head into 2025. ✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)*: Welcome a diversion. The insight you gain will help reformat your perception regarding the past, present and future. Learn from life lessons and take a step in a direction that excites you. You have the qualifications to live life your way. Make decisions that satisfy your needs and manifest joy. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Don't feel the need to participate in events with negative appeal. It's your life; taking the initiative to follow your heart, speak up and make choices that suit your needs will help you find your happy place. Instead, appeal to others to consider doing things your way. Romance is favored. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* An objective position will help you conclude what's best for you. Head into 2025 with a plan that suits your needs instead of bending to demands others make. Freedom of choice is yours to take. Give others your blessing to do as they please, and then pursue the path that beckons you. ✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are insightful, unique and flexible. You are receptive and energetic.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

1		4		6	9	8		
				1		6	2	
5	6				4		7	
	4	5						3
7		8				1	4	
6		1		9		2		8
4	1		6		8			2
2		7					8	6
8	9	6		2			1	7

Difficulty: ★★ 12/31

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

4	6	5	9	3	7	1	8	2
7	3	9	1	2	8	6	5	4
1	8	2	5	6	4	7	3	9
2	5	8	7	9	1	4	6	3
9	7	4	3	5	6	8	2	1
3	1	6	4	8	2	9	7	5
6	2	1	8	4	5	3	9	7
5	4	3	6	7	9	2	1	8
8	9	7	2	1	3	5	4	6

Difficulty: ★ 12/30

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

RINGING IN THE NEW YEAR Solution: 5 letters

S	G	S	S	E	M	A	G	N	I	T	I	C	X	E
E	R	L	Y	H	N	W	O	D	T	N	U	O	C	V
I	D	E	A	A	I	R	S	L	A	O	G	C	Y	I
R	R	S	E	S	D	K	E	W	I	N	T	E	R	T
O	E	P	H	H	S	I	E	N	I	S	T	L	A	S
M	S	E	S	T	C	P	L	B	N	I	O	E	U	E
E	S	C	S	K	A	F	E	O	M	I	E	B	N	F
M	T	I	I	R	A	G	I	E	H	Ⓗ	D	R	A	I
O	F	A	K	M	I	T	S	R	P	A	Ⓐ	A	J	R
V	I	L	I	N	U	S	I	U	S	M	R	Ⓣ	T	E
I	G	L	N	L	Q	C	Z	N	L	T	A	E	Ⓢ	W
E	Y	I	O	U	L	Z	O	I	G	S	P	T	A	O
S	N	S	A	O	L	W	F	O	R	T	U	N	E	R
G	E	R	C	E	N	G	A	P	M	A	H	C	F	K
R	E	K	A	M	E	S	I	O	N	O	S	A	E	S

© 2024 Andrews McMeel Syndication www.wonderword.com 12/31

Beginning, Bingo, Celebrate, Champagne, Cheers, Clock, Countdown, Dinner, Dress, Exciting, Family, Feast, Festive, Film, Fireworks, First, Fortune, Games, Gifts, Glass, Goals, Hats, Hike, Holidays, January, Kiss, Memories, Movies, Noisemaker, Parade, Park, Puzzle, Resolutions, Season, Skating, Snow, Special, Times Square, Winter, Wishes

Yesterday's Answer: Courtroom

For **WONDERWORD** apps, books & more, visit Wonderword.com, or call 1-855-232-2367.

Herro leads Heat over Rockets in game marred by fight, ejections

HOUSTON (AP)—Tyler Herro scored 27 points before being one of seven people ejected, six for their roles in a fight in the final minute of the Miami Heat's 104-100 victory over the Houston Rockets on Sunday night.

Herro was thrown to the ground by the Rockets' Amen Thompson with 35 seconds left and the Heat leading 99-94. Players and coaches from both benches then came onto the court.

Both players were thrown out along with Rockets guard Jalen Green, coach Ime Udoka and assistant coach Ben Sullivan. Terry Rozier was also ejected for Miami.

Houston led 92-85 after Fred VanVleet's layup with 8:10 to play, but the Rockets missed their next 11 shots, allowing Miami to tie the game when Herro found Haywood Highsmith for a 3-pointer with 4:47 to play.

Herro's jumper with 1:56 to play put the Heat on top for good. VanVleet was ejected in the final minute after appearing to make contact with referee Marc Davis, upset after being called for a 5-second violation that preceded the dustup with Thompson, Herro and others.

Playing the second night of a back-to-back and missing Jimmy Butler for a fifth straight game, Nikola Jovic finished with 18 points, seven rebounds, and six assists for the Heat. Highsmith added 15 points.

After blowing a 15-point, fourth-quarter lead against the Wolves, Houston struggled offensively in the fourth quarter, shooting just 6 for 24 from the field. Dillon Brooks scored 22 points after missing the last three games with a right ankle effusion.

AP

Miami Heat guard Tyler Herro (14) shoots a three-point shot as Houston Rockets center Steven Adams (12) and forward Amen Thompson, center, look on during the first half of an NBA basketball game Sunday, Dec. 29, 2024, in Houston

THUNDER 130, GRIZZLIES 106

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)—Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 35 points and Oklahoma City won their 11th straight game, beating shorthanded Memphis in a matchup of Western Conference leaders that turned lopsided before halftime.

Rookie Ajay Mitchell scored 17 points, Aaron Wiggins contributed 16 and Jalen Williams added 14 points and 10 rebounds for the Thunder (26-5), who opened a five-game lead over second-place Memphis.

Gilgeous-Alexander made 14 of 19 shots to go along with seven assists, six rebounds and a team-high four blocks. He sat most of the fourth quarter. Oklahoma City blocked nine shots, including three by center Isaiah Hartenstein.

The Thunder led 76-50 at halftime behind 23 points from Gilgeous-Alexander and 12 each from Mitchell and Kenrich Williams, who combined to go 5 for 7 on 3-point shots. Oklahoma City outscored the Grizzlies 42-19 in the second quarter to take control.

Desmond Bane had 22 points and nine rebounds for Memphis (22-11), which played without star Ja Morant (shoulder) and Zach Edey, the team's No. 9 overall draft pick, who was in concussion protocol. Jay Huff added 17 points but Jaren Jackson Jr., the team's leading scorer at 21.9 points per game, managed 13 points on 3-of-17 shooting.

MAGIC 102, NETS 101

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP)—Cole Anthony drove for a layup with 0.2 seconds left to complete Orlando's 17-point fourth-quarter comeback in a win over Brooklyn.

Cam Thomas missed a jumper from the corner at the final horn.

Anthony scored 10, and Tristan da Silva scored 13 of his 21 points in the fourth quarter for Orlando, which was down 71-51 midway through the third quarter. Goga Bitadze added 19 points, 11 rebounds and five assists.

The Magic's comeback was their second in eight days after Orlando rallied from 25 points down to beat Miami 121-114 on Dec. 21.

Thomas came off the bench with 25 points to lead the Nets in his first game since Nov. 25. Jalen Wilson added 16 points, including two free throws, with 6.2 seconds left.

Thomas, Brooklyn's leading scorer with 24.7 points per game, played 25 minutes after missing 13 games with a strained left hamstring.

PACERS 123, CELTICS 114

BOSTON (AP)—Tyrese Haliburton scored 31 points and Indiana rebounded from a 37-point loss to Boston two nights earlier by winning the rematch.

Andrew Nembhard, who returned after missing Friday's game with tendinitis in his left knee, added 17 points, eight rebounds and eight assists for the Pacers. Pascal Siakam chipped in with 17 points and Bennedict Mathurin had 14.

Jaylen Brown led Boston with 31 points and six assists. Jayson Tatum had 22 points, nine boards and six assists. Payton Pritchard added 21 points and Derrick White scored 17.

The Celtics lost their sixth game at home already this season. Last season, they went 37-4 at TD Garden during the regular season and 9-2 in the playoffs en route to the NBA championship.

HAWKS 136, RAPTORS 107

TORONTO (AP)—Trae Young had 34 points and 10 assists, De'Andre Hunter scored 22 points and Atlanta routed Toronto for their fourth straight win.

Clint Capela had 11 points and 13 rebounds as the Hawks opened a six-game trip by handing the reeling Raptors their 10th consecutive loss.

Scottie Barnes scored 19 points and RJ Barrett had 17, but the Raptors fell behind by more than 30 points and allowed more than 130 for the second straight game. Toronto gave up a franchise-worst 155 points in Thursday's loss at Memphis.

Young shot 7 for 13 from 3-point range, singlehandedly making as many shots from distance than the entire Raptors team, who combined to go 7 for 24.

Toronto's Bruce Brown made his season debut after sitting out the first 31 games recovering from right knee surgery. Brown soared for a one-handed dunk for his first points shortly after entering the game in the first quarter. He finished with 12 points in 19 minutes.

TIMBERWOLVES 112, SPURS 110

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—Donte DiVincenzo scored 26 points as Minnesota defeated San Antonio.

Rudy Gobert had 17 points and 15 rebounds for the Timberwolves, won won their third straight. Julius Randle had 16 points, while Jaden McDaniels added 12 points and 10 boards for Minnesota.

Anthony Edwards, who earlier in the day was fined $100,000 for continued use of profanity in postgame media comments, was held to 14 points, 11 below his season average.

After DiVincenzo made one of two free throws with 12.1 seconds left, the Spurs had one more possession down 112-110. San Antonio found a wide-open Jeremy Sochan for 3, but he came up short.

Wembanyama led San Antonio with 34 points and eight rebounds. Harrison Barnes had 24 points, Devin Vassell had 22 and Chris Paul dished out 14 assists.

Eagles clinch NFC East as Barkley crosses 2,000-yard mark

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—Saquon Barkley rushed for 167 yards to top 2,000 on the season, backup quarterback Kenny Pickett ran and threw for scores before departing with injured ribs, and the Philadelphia Eagles clinched the NFC East title by routing the Dallas Cowboys 41-7 on Sunday.

Barkley has 2,005 yards and needs 101 in next week's mostly meaningless regular-season finale to top Eric Dickerson and his 2,105 yards for the Los Angeles Rams in 1984.

BILLS 40, JETS 14

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP)—Josh Allen threw two touchdown passes and ran for another score, and the Buffalo Bills clinched the AFC's No. 2 seed with a 40-14 rout of the unravelling and undisciplined New York Jets on Sunday.

The Bills put the game away by capitalizing on two Jets turnovers and scoring three touchdowns over a 5:01 span in the closing minutes of the third quarter. Buffalo's defence forced three takeaways overall and sacked Aaron Rodgers four times, including a 2-yard loss for a safety in the second quarter.

BUCCANEERS 48, PANTHERS 14

TAMPA, Fla. (AP)—Baker Mayfield threw for 359 yards and five touchdowns to help the Tampa Bay Buccaneers keep their division and playoff hopes alive with a 48-14 rout of the Carolina Panthers on Sunday.

Tampa Bay's fifth win in the past six weeks nudged the first-place Bucs (9-7) a half-game ahead of Atlanta for the best record in the NFC South, with the Falcons set to play on the road later Sunday night at Washington.

RAIDERS 25, SAINTS 10

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—Aidan O'Connell passed for two touchdowns, tight end Brock Bowers broke two rookie NFL records, and the Las Vegas Raiders won for just the fourth time this season, 25-10 over the struggling New Orleans Saints on Sunday.

Bowers' seven catches for 77 yards gave him 108 receptions for 1,144 yards this season, eclipsing Mike Ditka's 1961 rookie tight end mark of 1,067 yards receiving and Puka Nacua's 2023 mark of 105 catches by a rookie at any position.

JAGUARS 20, TITANS 13

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (AP)—Mac Jones threw two touchdown passes, including one to standout rookie Brian Thomas Jr., and the Jacksonville Jaguars beat the Tennessee Titans 20-13 in the rain Sunday to sweep the season series for the fourth time in 30 years.

Jones completed 15 of 22 passes for 174 yards, with most of them going to Thomas. The first-round draft pick from LSU finished with seven receptions for 91 yards. His 11-yard TD catch with 7:05 remaining gave him his eighth game with at least 60 yards and a score, tying him with Hall of Famer Randy Moss for the most by a rookie in NFL history.

GIANTS 45, COLTS 33

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP)—The New York Giants snapped a franchise-record 10-game losing streak and ended the Indianapolis Colts' slim playoff hopes Sunday as Drew Lock threw four touchdown passes and ran for another in a 45-33 victory.

New York earned its first home win of the season and it no longer has control of the No. 1 overall pick in the draft.

VIKINGS 27, PACKERS 25

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—Sam Darnold added another exploit to his career-altering season, passing for a personal-best 377 yards and three touchdowns as the Minnesota Vikings hung on to beat the Green Bay Packers 27-25 on Sunday for their ninth consecutive victory that put them one win from the NFC's top seed for the playoffs.

DOLPHINS 20, BROWNS 3

CLEVELAND (AP)—Tyler Huntley stepped in for Tua Tagovailoa and stepped up for the Dolphins.

Miami still has a playoff pulse.

Huntley scrambled for a touchdown and threw for one while starting for the injured Tagovailoa, and the Dolphins stayed in the AFC wild-card race heading into their season finale with a 20-3 win over the Cleveland Browns on Sunday.

COMMANDERS 30, FALCONS 24

LANDOVER, Md. (AP)—Jayden Daniels connected with Zach Ertz in overtime for his third touchdown pass of the game to get the Washington Commanders into the playoffs by beating the Atlanta Falcons 30-24 on Sunday night in a back-and-forth prime-time showdown between highly drafted rookie quarterbacks.

Daniels ran for a season-high 127 yards and completed 24 of 36 passes for 227 yards and had two TD passes to Ertz and another to Olamide Zaccheaus to make the playoffs in his rookie year.

2024 TOP STORIES

6 Return of the 'Cage'

LEIGH GASES

Guam's Keith "Khaos" Sablan lifts Saipan's Derick Rangamar during the final minutes of the Cage of Fire's bantamweight mixed martial arts main event at the Garapan Central Park Roundhouse last Dec. 14.

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

After a six-year hiatus, the return of the Cage of Fire ignited a firestorm in the CNMI, as fighters from Saipan, Rota, and Guam lit up the night with explosive action last Dec. 14 at the Garapan Central Park Roundhouse.

Guam fighters brought the heat as they grappled, struck, and knocked their way to multiple wins in the Cage of Fire.

Guam's Keith "Khaos" Sablan set the octagon ablaze with his death grip and lightning-fast movements as he reigned over Saipan's Derick "El Peligro" Rangamar during the Cage of Fire's bantamweight mixed martial arts main event last Saturday at the Garapan Central Park Roundhouse.

Trench Tech founder Justis "Cuki" Alvarez said of the return, "It's been six years since our last cage fight! The year 2018 was the last time we set up the octagon at the Marianas Business Plaza in Susupe. So, it was a long time coming, and the 'return of the octagon' definitely did not disappoint!"

In the future, Alvarez said they plan on having at least two Ring of Fire events in the boxing ring and one Cage of Fire fight in the octagon, as well as another Mats on Fire Grappling submission fighting tournaments. "So, we forecast a busy and fun 2025 and beyond. We will keep everyone posted on the exact dates for each event," he said.

8 CNMI debuts in WBSC qualifier

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CNMI U12 Baseball Team poses for a group photo during the 2024 U12 Baseball World Baseball Softball Confederation Qualification Tournament in Guam held last Nov. 29-Dec. 2.

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

CNMI's U12 baseball team debuted in the 2024 U12 Baseball World Baseball Softball Confederation Qualification Tournament held in Guam from Nov. 27 to Dec. 3.

They took on Guam and Australia's U12 teams in a double round robin format.

Despite not having the results they were striving for, the CNMI U12 baseball team still stepped up to the plate against the two powerhouses.

Joining the tournament was a big leap of faith for the coaching staff and CNMI sluggers, as there hadn't been organized leagues since the typhoons of the past and the pandemic. Still, that didn't stop them from taking on the challenge against two teams that play ball all year round.

The 15-player team chosen by the Natibu Sports Association and the Saipan Baseball League went winless as they first lost to Australia, 1-26. They then played Guam in the afternoon and lost, 4-10. Then, it was a rematch against Australia but they lost again, 6-19. In their last game, they couldn't quite hold on to their lead and lost to Guam, 11-15.

Even with that, their team lead Herman Kintol of the SBL said the team showed out. He said that the level of competition was above what CNMI's sluggers are used to because of a lack of play time, and they had a limited amount of time to prepare for it. But despite the losses, Kintol shared that some CNMI players are Top 10 in offense and fielding during the tourney and that this is the step in the right direction of developing and bringing back baseball year-round in the community.

7 Micro Cup Canoe Race returns to Saipan's shores

LEIGH GASES

Saipan Paddling Club 1 team celebrates as they paddle to shore after the mixed V6 500m finals on Day 2 of the 24th Micronesia Cup Canoe Race at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

After a 12-year hiatus from hosting, the annual Micronesia Cup Canoe Race graced Saipan's shores once again in its 24th edition last October at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.

The Micro Cup is a regional va'a outrigger race that is hosted alternately by Guam, Palau, and the CNMI. Last year, it was hosted by Guam, with CNMI hauling in a bunch of medals.

The CNMI's Marianas Outrigger Club, Marianas Pacific Paddlers, and the Saipan Paddling Club represented their island home well against Guam and Marshall Islands with podium finishes in all the race categories.

They wrapped up the event with medals in the long-distance races, as well as multiple medals in the V1, V6, and V12 competitions.

9 NMI's debut in IWF World Champs

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Leowell Cristobal completes a lift during NMI's historic debut in the International Weightlifting Federation World Championships 2024 in Manama, Bahrain last Dec. 7.

By LEIGH GASES
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Gravity-defier Leowell Cristobal made a historic debut for the NMI and reset personal best lifts in the International Weightlifting Federation World Championships 2024 in Manama, Bahrain last Dec. 7.

The U.S. Air Force airman competed in Group C's 67-kg weight class and pulled an overall personal best of 105 kg snatch and a 143 kg clean & jerk, for a 248-kg total weight lifted for sixth place.

There were three groups in the competition based on lifters' declared entry totals which are the combined weight they expect to lift in the snatch and clean & jerk.

Group A typically consists of the strongest athletes with the highest entry totals, while Group B and Group C include those with progressively lower totals.

10 NMI's debut in BWF World Champs

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The NMI Junior National Badminton Team poses for a photo with their coach Janelle Pangilinan, far left, and manager Ezekiel Macario, far right, during the U19 Yonex BWF World Junior Championships 2024 in Nanchang, China held last Sept. 30-Oct. 5.

By LEIGH GASES
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The NMI debuted in the U19 Yonex BWF World Junior Championships 2024 in Nanchang, China held from Sept. 30 to Oct. 5.

The 12-man NMI Junior National Badminton Team competed in the mixed team relay (Suhandinata Cup) against topnotch junior badminton players from Group F nations Indonesia, Poland, Sri Lanka, and Macau, China.

They also participated in the Badminton World Federation Youth Athlete Development Training Camp last Sep. 26-28.

Despite losing in the tournament, coach Janelle Pangilinan said that the event was a great opportunity for the team to experience challenging players from other countries.

2 Billy Jean King Cup/Davis Cup debut for NMI tennis

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The CNMI 2024 Davis Cup and Billie Jean King Cup players and officials pose for a group at the Bahrain Tennis Federation tennis courts in Isa Town, Bahrain. Back row from left, Colin Sinclair, Tomas Abel, Robbie Schorr, Davis Cup team manager Karen Buettner, Colin Ramsey, and Davis Cup captain Jeff Race. Front row from left, Carol Lee, Hye Jin Elliott, Asia Raulerson, and Isabel Heras.

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Colin Sinclair, Robbie Schorr, Colin Ramsey, and Tomas Abel debuted for the CNMI in the Davis Cup, while the NMI lasses Carol Lee, Isabel Heras, Hye Jin Elliot, and Asia Raulerson debuted in the 2024 Billie Jean King Cup last November.

The Davis Cup is a team competition and is the largest annual team competition in tennis, with over 150 teams competing each year. The CNMI Davis Cup tennis team failed to earn promotion to the next level up, after losing to the Philippines, but despite that, skipper Jeff Race said the CNMI still had an impressive showing in its first ever Davis Cup competition.

Meanwhile, Lee, Heras, Elliot, and Raulerson topped their group and earned a promotion to Group 2 in 2025.

2024 TOP STORIES

4 Antoni Ogumoro signs with UT

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The CNMI's Antoni Ogumoro smiles for the camera as he officially signs to the University of Tennessee last week at Elgin High School in Oklahoma.

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

CNMI son and early high school graduate Antoni Kade Ogumoro is continuing his academic and athletic pursuits with the University of Tennessee in Knoxville after he officially put pen to paper and signed with them earlier this month.

Earlier this year, the 6'5," 320-lb offensive lineman committed to the University of Tennessee on a full-ride scholarship, joining the Tennessee Volunteers football program (also known as the Vols, UT, or Big Orange). He became the 10th commitment for UT's 2025 class.

He is an early enrollee and starts college on Jan. 20, 2025. He graduated high school last Dec. 13, but will walk with his senior class in May 2025.

He concluded his high school career on the Dean's Honor Roll. In athletics, he earned 3A First Team All-Area and 3A First Team All-Conference honors in 2023. In 2024, he was named among The Oklahoman's Top 30 Players in Oklahoma. Additionally, he was recognized as the District 4A-1 Offensive Newcomer of the Year, Oklahoma Preseason All-State First Team, and The Oklahoman's Class of 2025 Top Offensive Lineman.

He is also rated as the Top 45 Interior Offensive Line prospect nationally by ESPN (No. 33), On3 (No. 42), and 247Sports (No. 45)

3 NMI men repeat as Marianas Football Cup champs

NMIFA

Champions of the Marianas Football Cup 2024, the NMI Men's U20 National Team, poses for a group photo during the rain drenched awards ceremony after their last match against Guam at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

By LEIGH GASES
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The NMI men's team clinched the championship once again in this year's edition of the Marianas Football Cup after a dramatic finish via a tie-breaking shootout in their last matchup against Guam during a torrential downpour last August at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

The NMI and Guam men's U20 national teams played two matches with the home team taking Game 1, 2-0. In Game 2, Guam rebounded and won, also 2-0, to tie the tourney up with three points each. Since they were both tied with two goals apiece, they had to play an extra 30 minutes in their last match, but no one scored, so they had to break up the tie again via a shootout of penalty kicks.

In last year's Marianas Cup, the NMI men's U23 team clinched the title over Guam after they won with an aggregate score of 3-1 over two games. Guam took Game 1, 1-0, but the NMI won big, 3-0, in Game 2 for its first Marianas Cup men's title since its debut in 2007.

5 Two more int'l badminton tournaments hosted by CNMI

LEIGH GASES

Men's singles No. 5 seed Justin Hoh goes for a return during the second set of his finals against Ryoma Muramoto in the last Badminton World Federation Grade 3 International Challenge

By LEIGH GASES
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Two more international badminton tournaments brought athletes from all over the world to the CNMI—the Crowne Plaza Northern Marianas Open 2024 and the Dove Saipan International 2024 last July.

The Badminton World Federation Grade 3 International Challenge tournament featured athletes from 16 different countries at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Nate Guerrero, who is a CNMI athlete/coach, said that the international tourneys on island are beneficial to the youth and up-and-coming badminton athletes because they get to be exposed to different skill levels and experience a different level of play than what they are used to on just the local scale. "It's a really great experience and opportunity," he said.

Last year, the CNMI hosted for the first time two badminton Olympic qualifiers—the Crowne Plaza Northern Marianas Open 2023 and the TakeCare Saipan International 2023.

The two-week qualifiers welcomed more than 200 players, coaches, and officials from 19 different countries, and according to Badminton Oceania president Loke Poh Wong, the Northern Marianas Badminton Association has put the CNMI on the world map for badminton.

Herro leads Heat over Rockets in game marred by fight, ejections.

PAGE 33

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Billy Jean King Cup/ Davis Cup debut for NMI tennis.

PAGE 35

TOP SPORTS STORY OF 2024

Team NMI's historic run in 10th Micronesian Games

NMSA

Team NMI athletes pose for a group photo during the send-off ceremony of the 10th Micronesian Games last June at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

By LEIGH GASES
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The 10th Micronesian Games united nations across Micronesia in a celebration of camaraderie, sportsmanship, and competition, with Team NMI's over 100 strong athletes emerging as a standout among nine other nations.

Despite unfavorable circumstances such as the long flights, uncomfortable living conditions, extreme weather, and all the trials that came with competing far from home, Team NMI's athletes held the flag high with pride in their historic run at the Games held in the Republic of Marshall Islands last June.

The medal bounty for the team consisted of 70 gold medals, 23 silvers, and 29 bronzes for a total of 122 medals and was nothing short of remarkable.

The team's medal tally included 70 gold medals, 23 silvers, and 29 bronzes, for an impressive total of 122 medals. This gold medal haul broke the NMI's previous record of 44 golds set during the 2010 Micronesian Games in Palau. Additionally, the total medal count was the highest ever achieved by Team NMI. And, for the first time since 2002, the team also topped the overall medal standings.

All eight sports represented by Team NMI won medals, with the NMI National Swim Team leading the charge. The swimmers accounted for 49 golds, 15 silvers, and 14 bronzes, making theirs the most successful campaign of any sport in the delegation.

Team NMI's unparalleled performance among nine other Micronesian nations earned them a historic place in sports history and secured their recognition as *Saipan Tribune's* last ever Sports Story of the Year.

The NMI National Tennis Team brought home seven gold medals and two bronze. It was a clean sweep for all events.

The NMI National Weightlifting Team won three gold, five silver, and four bronze medals.

The comeback of NMI wrestling showed a strong debut with their sweep of three gold medals each for a total of six gold.

The NMI Women's National Basketball Team won silver, redeeming themselves after falling short in the 2018 Micro Games.

The NMI Women's National Fastpitch Softball Team won its first ever medal in the Micro Games with a bronze.

The NMI National Beach Volleyball Team won a bronze each in the men's and women's division.

Medals were not only won, but Micro Games, national records, and personal best records were shattered as well.

Notably, NMI's track star Tania Tan reset the 10,000m record with her finish time of 41:19:00.

For the team's stellar performance, incentives were given to medalists based on the medals they won, as well as for athletes who did not win medals.

Individually, Isaiah Aleksenko won nine gold; Kean Pajarillaga collected seven gold and one silver; Maria Batallones gathered nine gold and three silver; Frances Raho won four gold, two silver and two bronze; Kouki Watanabe grabbed three gold, three silver, one bronze; and Shoko Litulumar won two gold medals and six silver medals; Justin Ma won five bronze; Richard Zhao had one bronze; Sari Barman won three bronze; and Maria Guerrero won two bronze. Nagi Tenorio completed the swim team and they were coached by Hiroyuki Kimura, Richard Sikkel, David Roberto Jr., Christian Villacrusis, and managed by Yuko Kimura.

The NMI National Athletics Team hauled in 13 medals—five gold, two silver, and six bronze medals. Gold medals were won by Tan with three, and Lyle Andrew and Maria Quitugua with one each; Simon Tang and Cody Shimizu won a silver medal each; and bronze was won by Lia Rangamar, Daniel Joab, Andrew, Justin Camacho, and Quitugua with two.

The NMI National Tennis Team brought home seven gold medals and two bronze. It was a clean sweep for all events as the team consisted of Isabel Heras, Robbie Schorr, Colin Ramsey, Hoo Wang, Si Woo Lee, Irin Chung, Hannah Chae. Wang and Ramsey won one bronze, while Chung won the other bronze. They were coached and managed by Jeff Race and John Bradley, and were joined by technical official Lydia Tan.

The NMI National Weightlifting Team won three gold, five silver, and four bronze medals. Kaya Rasa swept her division and won three gold, Lowell Cristobal bagged two silver and one bronze, Riella Ichiuo snatched three silver, and flag bearer Antonette Labausa won three bronze. The rest of the team were made up of Jaden Andrew, Lucio Eugenio, and Joseph Pangelinan and were coached by John Davis.

The aforementioned comeback of NMI wrestling showed a strong debut with their sweep of three gold medals each for a total of six gold by Ryan Babauta and James Attao-Greene Jr. They were coached and managed by Rick Bauer and Jason Tarkong.

The NMI Women's National Basketball Team won silver. They were made up of Azzy Fatialofa, Madelein Alegre, Alliyah Fernandez, are Sylvina Simram, Yasmeen Younis, Kaia Travilla, Michelle Kautz, Lia Rangamar, Destiny Pangelinan, Lalaine Pagarao, Cassandra Camacho, and were coached by Connie Camacho.

The NMI Women's National Fastpitch Softball Team won its first ever medal in the Micro Games with a bronze. They were made up of Ashlie Aguon, Christy Aldan, Jaylina Borja, Kiara Borja, Angel Deleon Guerrero, Rayna Deleon Guerrero, Jenisha Dubrall, Mayiah Duenas, Britney Gopez, Destiny Pangelinan, Alannah Sablan, Rosie Saralu, Kiana Aldan, Jhaneeka Atalig, Kiana Camacho, and Keolani Rios. The coaches were Manny Sablan, Derron Flores, Mariano Aguon, and Mark Flores.

The NMI National Beach Volleyball Team won a bronze each in the men's and women's division. Aurora Santos and Kathy Winkfield bagged bronze in the women's division, while Dylan Mister and Jermaine Salas bagged bronze in the men's division.